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BULLETIN

OF THE

MADRAS GOVERNMENT MUSEUM

EDITED BY THE DIRECTOR

THE AMARAVATI MODE OF SCULPTURE

By

C. SIVARAMAMURTI, M.A.,
(Former Curator, Archaeology Section, Government Museum, Madras)
Director, National Museum, New Delhi.

New Series—General Section, Volume XI, No. 1

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1976

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AFFECTIONATELY TO

MY FRIENDS

MLLE. JEANNINE AUBOYER

AND

DOUGLAS E. BARRETT

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

In 1962, I was invited by the University of Madras to deliver the Sir S. Subrahmanya Ayyar, Endowment Lectures. For this I chose the theme of the special mode of the Amaravati Sculptor to express suggestively the thought, theme or story in a sculptural narrative. As my earlier, major study of the Amaravati Sculptures in the Madras Museum was published in the Bulletin of the Museum. I felt this study of the Amaravati Sculptor's method of sculpturing should also go as its sequal in the same Bulletin. I am thankful to Dr. S. T. Satyamurti, Director of the Madras Museum, for the interest he evinced in its publication, to the University of Madras for permission to print it as a Madras Museum Bulletin, to the Archaeological Survey of India the British Museum the Musee Guimet and the National Museum for the photos kindly supplied by them to illustrate this. To Mr. M. R. Srinivasan of the Madras Government Press I am beholden for readily arranging to print this book with every possible care for its proper get up and speedy completion. I cannot adequately thank Dr. Mrs. Morley, Former Director of the National Museum for constantly encouraging me to study this and other similar themes which have appeared since as books. I am grateful to my friends Mr. D.E. Barrett and Mlle. Jeannine Auboyer but for whose immediate help some of the most telling illustrations would not have been here. To Mr. Srinivasa Desikan I offer my best thanks for carefully preparing the index.

New Delhi,
30th August 1970.

C. SIVARAMAMURTI,
Jawaharlal Nehru Fellow.

LIST OF PLATES

I Subjugation of Nalagiri, Sātavāhana, 2nd Century A.D. Amarāvatī, Government Museum, Madras.

II Story of Angulimāla, Sātavāhana, 2nd Century A.D., Amarāvatī. Government Museum, Madras.

III Conversion of Yaśa and his friends, Sātavāhana, 2nd Century A.D, Amarāvatī, Government Museum, Madras.

IV Subjugation of Nalagiri, Ikshvāku, 2nd-3rd Century A.D. Goli, Government Museum, Madras.

V Subjugation of Nalagiri, 2nd-3rd Century A.D., Ikshvāku, Nāgārjunakoṇḍa, Nagarjunakoṇḍa Museum.

VI Mural depicting Subjugation of Nalagiri, Vākāṭaka, 5th Century A.D., Cave No. 17, Ajanta.

VII Subjugation of Nalagiri, Ikshvāku, 2nd-3rd Century A.D., Nāgārjunakoṇḍa, Nāgārjunakoṇḍa Museum.

VIII Mural depicting Buddha from Balawaste, Kushāṇa, 3rd-4th Century A.D., Central Asia, National Museum, New Delhi.

IX Māradharshaṇa, Ikshvāku, 2nd-3rd Century A.D., Ghaṇṭaśāla, Musee Guimet, Paris.

X *Udaremukha* motif in Māradharshaṇa scene, late Sātavāhana or Ikshvāku, 2nd-3rd Century A.D., Amarāvatī, Government Museum, Madras.

XI *Udaremukha* motif in Māradharshaṇa scene, Vākāṭaka, 5th Century A.D., Ajanta.

XII *Udaremukha* motif in Kabandha episode of Rāmāyaṇa, Śailendra, 9th Century A.D., Prāmbanan.

XIII (*a*) Māradharshaṇa scene and enlightenment of Buddha, Sātavāhana, 2nd-3rd Century A.D., Amarāvatī, Government Museum, Madras.

(*b*) Māradharshaṇa, Sātavāhana, 2nd Century A.D., Amarāvatī, Government Museum, Madras.

XIV Māra obstructing feeding Pachchekabuddha, Sātavāhana, 2nd Century A.D., Amarāvatī, Government Museum, Madras.

XV Māndhātā overcoming opposition and triumphant, Sātavāhana, 2nd Century A.D., Amarāvatī, Government Museum, Madras.

XVI Māndhātā shares throne with Indra, Sātavāhana, 2nd Century A.D., Amarāvatī, British Museum, London.

XVII Bhūridatta with Nāgarāja in Bhogavatī, Sātavāhana, 2nd Century A.D., Amarāvatī, British Museum, London.

XVIII Cowherd boys and the Nāga king as the snake in the anthill, Sātavāhana, 2nd Century A.D., Amarāvatī, Amarāvatī Museum.

XIX Chhaddanta Jātaka, Sātavāhana, 2nd Century A.D., Amarāvatī, Government Museum, Madras.

XX (*a*) Frieze showing Māradharshaṇa, Sujātā's offering and Prince Siddhārtha renouncing the world and throwing away his royal turban. Sātavāhana, 2nd Century A.D., Amarāvatī, Government Museum, Madras.

(*b*) Close up of panel showing Prince Siddhārtha renouncing the world and throwing away his royal turban, 2nd Century A.D., Amarāvatī, Government Museum, Madras.

XXI (*a*) Frieze showing Prince Siddhārtha renouncing the world and throwing away his royal turban, Māradharshaṇa, Buddha preaching and the stūpa symbolic of parinirvāṇa, 2nd Century A.D., Amarāvatī, British Museum, London.

(*b*) Close up of Prince Siddhārtha renouncing the world and throwing away his royal turban. Sātavāhana, 2nd Century A.D., Amarāvatī, British Museum, London.

XXII Vishṇu rescues elephant Gajendra, Gupta, 5th Century A.D., Deogarh.

XXIII Mahishamardinī Durgā triumphing over Mahishāsura, Eastern Chāḷukya, 10th Century A.D., Biccavolu.

XXIV Details of Madonna and Child with saints and angels, by Fra Bartolomeo, Cathedral Lucca.

XXV Enthroned Madonna with saints and angels, by Girolama Romanini, Municipal Museum, Padua.

XXVI Virgin and Child, Central Panel of alter piece, by Albrecht Durer, Museum, Dresden.

XXVII The Madonna of Mercy, by Bartolomeo Bivarini, Venice, S. Maria Formosa.

XXVIII Mahilāmukhajātaka, Sātavāhana, 2nd Century A.D., Amarāvatī, Government Museum, Madras.

XXIX The story of Udayana and Sāmāvatī, Sātavāhana, 2nd Century A.D., Amarāvatī, Government Museum, Madras.

XXX The celestial nymph Rohiṇī Khattiyakannā, Sātavāhana, 2nd Century A.D., Amarāvatī, Government Museum, Madras.

XXXI The story of Bodhikumāra and his wife, Sātavāhana, 2nd Century A.D., Amarāvatī, Government Museum, Madras.

XXXII The story of Janapadakalyāṇī Rūpanandā, Sātavāhana, 2nd Century A.D., Amarāvatī, Government Museum, Madras.

XXXIII Buddha visits Yaśodharā and Rāhula, Sātavāhana, 2nd Century A.D., Amarāvatī, British Museum, London.

XXXIV Buddha visits Yaśodharā and Rāhula, Ikshvāku, 2nd Century A.D., Goli, Government Museum, Madras.

XXXV Interpretation of the dream of Māyā, Ikshvāku, 2nd Century A.D., Nāgārjunakoṇḍa, National Museum, New Delhi.

XXXVI Śuddhodana visits Māyā, Sātavāhana, 2nd Century A.D., Amarāvatī, Government Museum, Madras.

XXXVII Śuddhodana visits Māyā, Śailendra, 8th Century A.D., Barabudur, Java.

XXXVIII Prince Siddhārtha in the harem held by three bonds. Sātavāhana, 2nd Century A.D., Amarāvatī, Government Museum, Madras.

XXXIX Siddhārtha in the harem listening to music and bound by bonds. Sātavāhanā, 2nd Century A.D., Amarāvatī, Government Museum, Madras.

XL The story of Mittavindaka. Sātavāhana, 2nd Century A.D., Amarāvatī, Government Museum, Madras.

XLI Sarvamdadāvadāna, Sātavāhana, 2nd Century A.D., Amarāvatī, British Museum, London.

XLII (*a* & *b*) The Story of Vidhurapaṇḍita, Sātavāhana, 2nd Century A.D., Amarāvatī, Government Museum, Madras.

XLIII Vidhurapaṇḍita discoursing to the Nāga queen, Sātavāhana, 2nd Century A.D., Amarāvati, Government Museum, Madras.

XLIV Dūtajātaka, Sātavāhana, 2nd Century A.D., Amarāvatī, Government Museum, Madras.

XLV Dūtajātaka, Ikshvāku, 2nd-3rd Century A.D., Nāgārjunakoṇḍa, National Museum, New Delhi.

XLVI Dharmayuddha or Righteous *Battle*, Sātavāhana, 2nd Century A.D., Amarāvatī, Government Museum, Madras.

XLVII The story of Nanda, Sātavāhana, 2nd Century A.D., Amarāvatī, Government Museum, Madras.

XLVIII The story of Nanda, Ikshvāku, 2nd-3rd Century A.D., Nāgārjunakoṇḍa, National Museum, New Delhi.

XLIX The division of the relics of Buddha, music and dance, Sātavāhana, 2nd Century A.D., Amarāvatī, Government Museum, Madras.

L (*a*) Yaksha feeding an antelope and a leonine stag, Sātavāhana, 2nd Century A.D., Amarāvatī, Government Museum, Madras.

(*b*) Decadramcha from Syracuse illustrating a crown of leaves held by the Goddess of Victory over hero.

LI Rhizome of flowers issuing from the mouth of Yaksha, Sātavāhana, 2nd Century A.D., Amarāvatī, Government Museum, Madras.

LII (*a*) Śrī Lakshmī pulling rhizome out of the mouth of *makara*, Sātavāhana, 2nd Century A.D., Amarāvatī, Government Museum, Madras.

(*b*) Celestial pairs carrying meandering flower rhizome, Sātavāhana, 2nd Century A.D., Amāravatī, Government Museum, Madras.

LIII (*a*) & (*b*) Winged and fish-tailed *īhāmrigas* or animals of fancy, Sātavāhana, 2nd Century A.D., Jaggayyapeṭa, Government Museum, Madras.

LIV Buddha crossing the river Nerañjara, Sātavāhana, 2nd Century A.D., Amarāvatī, Government Museum, Madras.

LV King standing at ease with a hand on hip and the other on his horse with queen to right and attendants suggests Māndhātā ; tusks presented on tray and queen fainting in king's lap suggests Chhaddanta Jātaka.

LVI Two princes on a single throne suggests Māndhātā and Śakra; Prince with dove in hand and a scale below suggests Śibi's story; Prince's striding overcoming obstacles suggests Māndhātā's triumph or Māra's unimpeded march.

THE AMARAVATI MODE OF SCULPTURE.

Sir S. Subrahmania Ayyar Endowment Lectures, Madras University, 1962.

BY

C. SIVARAMAMURTI.

The rail period at Amaravati is probably the most important when a definite contribution to the language of art was made by the sculptor of the Sātavāhana realm in the middle of the 2nd Century A.D. It is at Amaravati where Buddhist art had probably the greatest efflorescence. It is here that lost Buddhist texts illustrating the lives of the Bodhisattva are preserved in lithic narrations, not in words but in sculptural panels. Here have been chosen stories elsewhere unthought of. There is a freshness here which invites study of the material with greater joy and zeal. The hackneyed theme which has to be repeated is given an artistic twist to make it appear lively. Everywhere the sculptor has devised his own way of presentation. When one knows the mind of the sculptor and the way of his portrayal it becomes easier to understand and follow his method of approach. The presence or absence of certain factors in a panel help to determine its identification. Such devises have cumulatively created a language of his own for the Amaravati sculptor. The charm of this effective language has compelled the attention of subsequent schools not only in India but even in far away places like Java.

The main forte of the Amaravati sculptor is his subtle suggestion. The mode of arrangement in the compositions in the different panels and medallions composing scenes from the *Jātakas* or the life story of Buddha, very often shows by contrast the emphasis laid by the sculptor on something specially sought to be conveyed to the spectator.

In the subjugation of Nalagiri, a medallion of outstanding aesthetic quality at Amaravati, the mode of representation is clearly noticed as one of the usual methods of narration of a long story and its sequel in a short compass (Plate I). Not only is the elephant repeated here twice in the streets of Rājagriha, first as a mad elephant, creating panic amongst the people in the street by its furious onslaught, trampling and tearing people on the way, and a second time as a completely subdued tame animal kneeling at the feet of the Master, but even the atmosphere in the street of frightened women hugging to their men and seeking safety in running away from the furious animal is contrasted by the calm of the monks towards the end, where the animal kneels; the same emotions are repeated in a different way by the people in the balcony, conscious of their safety from above, watching with pity the terrorized people in the street, but towards the end where the scene changes, with hands folded in

reverence to the Master who could subdue so furious an animal. The sculptor has not only achieved his purpose by this double presentation in a medallion but has more than suggested the great achievement of Buddha's subjugation of so furious an animal, and it is as much as to say that even an animal, and that in rut, could understand and honour the glory of the Master.

On top of all this, in a period when the human form of Buddha was in vogue, as it had come into use much earlier, the sculptor has introduced in the place of the figure of the standing Master, a symbolic devise and a special one, unknown elsewhere, a creation of the Amaravati sculptor himself, a flaming pillar on a pair of feet on lotus crowned by a wheel topped by *triratna.*

This special symbol suggests the glory of Buddha as higher than the lotus symbolising Brahmā, higher than the feet symbolising Vishṇu, higher than the flaming pillar, the combined concept of Agni and Rudra, and higher than the wheel, the solar symbol, as combining all the best in *triratna* in himself. The great stature of Buddha is thereby pronounced almost in this symbolic Buddhist *Viśvarūpa.*

This form so appealed to the Amaravati sculptor, who created it, that wherever special emphasis was to be placed on Buddha's great personality, the flaming pillar, as standing Buddha, was repeated.

In another context, the subjugation of Angulimāla, who became a terror to the people in the region and a menace even to the king, who owed a duty towards the people as their protector, the ferocity of the mad youth, wearing a garland of cut fingers that he was gathering as his teacher's fee, is effectively presented by using the devise of contrast. Here again there is a repetition of two scenes in one panel, the same Angulimāla repeated twice, first so very crazy and hard-hearted as not to be moved even by the presence of his own mother, whom he tries to attack to cut off her fingers, and again a second time kneeling at the feet of the Master (Plate II). The Master himself is presented not in physical form but in the new device of the sculptor of Amaravati, the standing symbol of a flaming pillar just described. It is that potent factor of the awe-inspiring personality of Buddha that could make Angulimāla suddenly become so docile, where even filial love and duty could not dictate to him his mode of conduct. This sculpture presents a story rather unusual in representations elsewhere on Buddhist monuments, and even for that reason is most interesting. But the greater interest is in the mode of narration of the story. the contrast and the emphasis in the personality of Buddha achieved by the symbol chosen for the purpose.

Another important sculpture from the Amaravati rail is the conversion of Yaśa and his friends (Plate III). Yaśa, the son of Sujāta who was brought up with the utmost care by his father stealthily ran away one night to the Master

who received him with affection and made him a monk. The disconsolate father discovered this and approached the Master who taught him to forget such worldly affairs and helped him to become an *arahat.* The fifty-five companions of Yaśa, who went to the monastery to induce their friend to return, and join them in their gay life as usual, were also so struck with the manner and appearance of the Master that they also resolved to become monks, and were admitted to the order by the Buddha.

Here again the flaming pillar is repeated twice ; once to show the approach of Yaśa as a princely youth, in which form he appears on the one side, and as the converted monk on the other ; and again for the father of Yaśa who is shown kneeling at the feet of the Master and offered monk-robes by Yaśa himself. The companions of Yaśa are shown on one side and nearest Yaśa himself represented as a monk, almost as if to suggest that these princely youths became monks struck by the majesty of the Master. The glory of the Master is again suggested in the usual symbolic form of the flaming pillar on feet resting on lotus crowned by wheel and *triratna.*

This mode of representation at Amaravati has had such an impress on subsequent schools, that we find, in the self-same depiction of the subjugation of Nalagiri at Goli (Plate IV), Nagarjunakonda (Plate V) and Ajanta (Plate VI), the synoptic narration of the episode of the furious and subdued animal is repeated with a little more of elaboration. At Nagarjunakonda in the self-same panel the standing flaming pillar substitutes the anthropomorphic representation of the Master (Plate VII).

The greatest tribute paid to this significant symbol of Buddha is in Central Asia, where t travelled almost within a few decades and was adopted as a symbol to be shown on the anthropomorphic form of Buddha himself. A painting of Buddha from Balawaste, now in the National Museum collection of Central Asian Antiquities, is the most interesting among the depictions of Buddha from anywhere in the world (Plate VIII). It is of the late Kushāṇa period and shows several important symbols erranged on the body of the Buddha. There is a clear *śrīvatsa* mark on the chest, which is never seen in any other representation anywhere, as the monk's robe always covers it. The mountain Meru with the serpent Vāsuki wound around it in a pool is a symbol of the churning of the ocean by the gods and demons to obtain ambrosia. The moon, according to the *Vedas,* is ambrosia that arose from the mind of *Virāṭpurusha-chandramā manaso jātah.* Buddha is here conceived and depicted as *Virāṭpurusha* in the *Viśvarūpa* aspect.

But the most important of the symbols shown on his body, are the two on the arms, the flaming pillar on a lotus, topped by three flames. The flames are shown as leaves, as in the case also of the *vajra* symbol located on Buddha's fore-arms. When we recall the identical symbol of the flaming pillar on

lotus from Amaravati in the Krishna valley representing standing Buddha and the significance of the superiority of Buddha, *dharma* and *sangha* over Brahmā represented as lotus, and pillar represented as Śiva combining Agni, seen in the flames, we should really wonder how the thoughts spread to such great distances. Only we do not have here the solar wheel and the feet, respectively on the top and bottom of the flaming pillar, to suggest Sūrya and Vishṇu.

The synoptic method being a favourite one at Amaravati, the Māradharshaṇa scene of Buddha overcoming Māra is presented in this mode. On one side there is Māra shown approaching Buddha seated on his huge elephant Girimekhala, attended by his retinue, defiant and with a confidence of his own in his capacity to overcome the hermit thirsting for enlightenment. Buddha is centrally represented by the symbol of the empty throne and the feet on the *pādapīṭha* below the throne. The scene is repeated again on the other side of the throne, this time Māra discomfited, hurrying away abashed, his retinue crestfallen, including his beautiful *Māravadhūs*. In this representation of the triumphant entry and the crestfallen retreat the whole story of Buddha's overcoming Māra is effectively narrated (Plate IX).

The *udaremukha* motif is herein introduced in a very clear way, though its context really lies in the incident of Kabandha in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. But an effective horror picture of the hordes around Māra, who is seemingly beautiful but really dreadful, is thus presented. This motif occurs in this scene at Amaravati (Plate X), at Ghantasala (Plate IX), later at Ajanta in Vākāṭaka representation (Plate XI), and through the Vākāṭaka realm has travelled into that of the Guptas and figures again at Sarnath. The motif became so popular that in Chāḷukyan and Pallava sculptures it occurs in the most natural way in different contexts and in its own context from the *Rāmāyaṇa* in distant Prambanan in Java (Plate XII). .

The synoptic representation of Māradharshaṇa continues through the Sātavāhana and Ikshvāku period and later even in Ajanta it has the commendation of the chisel of the Vākāṭaka sculptor ; only here Māra carries the *Makaradhvaja* and is a little more sweet. But this is only a question of degree, as the Māra riding Girimekhala at Amaravati, Ghantasala and Nagarjunakonda is definitely more refined than the colossal gnome-like figure at Sanchi, whom an earlier Sātavāhana sculptor has thought of in his narration of the whole story, though in a more clumsy fashion. The refined mode of representation starts only at Amaravati in the rail period and this is probably the period that inspires all later work in the Deccan and in the South, influencing even the North and travelling great distances to islands far away in South East Asia.

A special way of representing Māradharshaṇa scene at Amaravati is to make Māra appear in the attitude of a defiant warrior standing in the *ālīḍha* pose with his arms resting akimbo on his waist, looking on the world with disdain

and trying to tear himself away from those who beseech and catch him by his feet. This is the way that the Amaravati sculptor represents the fight of conscience against sin. Sin is unafraid and rushes, but conscience, the spirit of goodness, *dharma*, stops the onrush of unholy sin. Māra represents the foolhardy rush towards worldly pleasures.

The long scene at Amaravati which is a unique one, represents the whole story of Māra's preparation and attack on Buddha, his defeat and Buddha's enlightenment (Plate XIII*a*). Coomaraswamy thinks that these scenes are the most remarkable and complicated of all the ones connected with the great enlightenment. Like the *Rāvaṇasabhā*, Māra holds his own *sabhā*, and then he rushes, stopped by a counseller who differs from him in agreeing to so impossible an adventure and so unholy. It is here that the sculptor represents by suggestion the futile nature of Māra's onslaught—the stopping itself is the *amaṅgala*—*tadevābhūdamaṅgalam*. It starts with this inauspiciousness. His hordes are shown riding fiery aerial lions. Māra himself is carried in an aerial palankeen and his onslaught is again against the flaming pillar, the usual symbol of the indomitable and fiery blazing personality of the Buddha, so characteristic of the Amaravati sculptor to introduce in telling contexts. The Bodhighara, with worshippers on either side, suggests the complement of enlightenment when deities assemble from the four quarters to adore Buddha.

In another sculpture of the temptation (Plate XIII*b*) this scene is repeated—Māra's holding council, his rushing out to attack as he is impeded caught by his legs and requested to desist, his going by the palanquin with his hordes mounted on fiery lions, his fierce onslaught on the empty throne signifying the presence of Buddha. Here, like Angulimāla, Māra is represented twice, first in his fury and again subdued and bowing to the Master. So the attacking Māra is tellingly made to bow at the feet of the Master. Here again it is a synoptic representation of the crucial part of the incident. This is in close conformity with the other mode of presenting Māra rushing furiously on his elephant Girimekhala but later hurrying away discomfited, but only after salutation to the great Enlightened One. Thus the glory of Buddha is again suggestively represented in his own way by the Amaravati sculptor.

In another sculpture, a fragment from Amaravati (Plate XIV), the impeding of Māra himself is represented. The Bodhisattva born as the Lord High Treasurer of Banaras, brought food to feed a *Pachchekabuddha* who had just risen from a seven days trance, but Māra who desired that the *Pachchekabuddha* should die of hunger, tried to stop this feeding and created a pit of red hot embers. Undaunted by this the Bodhisattva strode on over the surface of the pit of fire and emptied his food into the bowl of the *Pachchekabuddha*. This obstacle is indicated by a huge stone with a multi-headed snake-hood behind which is a turbaned man with hands clasped in adoration and accepting defeat.

This is the Amaravati sculptor's way of depicting an obstacle to be overcome even as the Garuḍa overcomes the Nāga. Actually the stride of the triumphant is the stride of the Garuḍa and the defeat is represented as the crestfallen hooded Nāga.

In the story of Māndhātā, which is a favourite in Amaravati sculptures, Māndhātā's triumphant tour in Jambūdvīpa and other islands before he reaches the world of Śakra himself, is all represented by his being shown in the *ālīḍha* posture, the hands akimbo resting on his waist, defiant, in the attitude of Garuḍa overcoming the reptile hoods, while the defeated clasps his hands in obeisance (Plate XV).

This favourite devise has been followed at Nagarjunakonda also in similar contexts where obstacles have to be presented. But it generally occurs more frequently in the story of Māndhātā.

Talking of the story of Māndhātā, the Amaravati sculptor has a special device of suggesting the emperor by the simple composition of two kings on a throne, one with a crown and the other with a turban (Plate XVI). This at once suggests the human and the divine kings together in heaven, Śakra being the only one entitled to the crown *kirīṭa*, this mode of representation leaves no room for doubt as to the identity of the other, *ardhāsanam gotrabhido' dhitashṭhau* as Kālidāsa would put it in the context of the heroes of the Raghu line who took rank with Indra himself.

This simple devise of helping understanding the *Māndhātu jātaka* has almost a parallel in the representation of an earthly ruler with a Naga king, both occupying the same throne, but this time the snake-hoods helping the identification of the *jātaka* as that of Bhūridatta (XVII). The spot where the scene is laid, Bhogavatī, the seat of the Nāgas, is wonderfully suggested by the rich variety of music and dance represented. An excellent medallion from the British Museum gives the splendour of Bhogavatī in the manner most appropriate.

That this powerful and glamorous prince of the snakes submits himself to the utmost torture is depicted almost with a pathos, where, as an ordinary snake, he puts out his neck from the ant-hill in fear of the cowherd boys that rally round to torture him, as he observes his vow of austerity. This again is a favourite devise of a picture of contrast which the Amaravati sculptor often repeats. There are two well known panels portraying this scene both in the British Museum and in the Museum at the site of Amaravati (Plate XVIII). And it is this that has inspired the interesting painting of this scene at Ajanta.

The synoptic representation of a story at Amaravati is nowhere more complicated than in that of Chhaddanta in a medallion now in the Madras Museum (Plate XIX). The elephant is repeated so often within the same

medallion that it may appear difficult to make out what is meant at different stages. But the principal elephant Chhaddanta is carefully singled out by the sculptor for special treatment. The umbrella held over him is significant. He is surrounded by his consorts and so many other less important animals of the herd, one of them holding the umbrella for him as the leader of the group. This is the first and most important introduction to the story, which is laid amidst lotuses in a lake, on the banks of which, the Amaravati sculptor has chosen to depict wonderful figures of pairs of antelopes, boar, lion and other wild animals, so refreshingly suggestive of huge forest around. The hunter watching the animal, then approaching Chhaddanta, the noble animal himself cutting his own tusks, and the wicked hunter carrying them away, is all in sequence in a medallion capable of being represented only by a sculptor of the eminence of one from Amaravati whose knowledge of composition and balance and sequences could alone enable him to so depict it.

A special devise for proclaiming the achievement of something very great is noticed at Amaravati for the first time, and this is repeated in later centuries in almost similar contexts in that suggestive sense, giving the motif a very interesting flavour. Prince Siddhārtha who renounces the world to become a monk strips his jewels and royal turban and presents them to Chhanna, his beloved charioteer, who is as deeply in grief as even the dumb animal, that carried the glorious prince away from Kapilavastu. In the depiction of this scene at Amaravati there are angels shown fluttering above Siddhārtha, holding a crown over his head, as much as to say, this is a crowning achievement. Though the sculpture fragment at the Madras Museum is not so well preserved (Plate XX-*a*, *b*), the panel from the British Museum is exceedingly elegant and represents this scene most effectively (Plate XXI-*a*, *b*). The Nagarjunakonda panel depicting the same situation is a close parallel of this. It is no surprise that such a significant device for extolling more great accomplishments was accepted and as a *tour de force* by later sculptors.

At Deogarh, Vishṇu on Garuḍa, come to rescue the elephant in distress—Gajendramokshada—has similarly angels holding up a large crown right above his head, as much as to say that this is a great and crowning achievement of even Vishṇu; and it must be remembered that the Gajendramoksha panel at Deogarh ranks among the greatest masterpieces of sculpture in India (Plate XXII).

It does not stop with that, and even later, in early Eastern Chāḷukya sculpture at Biccavolu there is a similar representation in a niche where Mahisbamardinī Durgā overcoming Mahishāsura is applauded similarly by the crown of victory held right above her head by celestials fluttering in the air (Plate XXIII.)

It is probably interesting to compare this with several similar representations of fluttering angels holding up a chaplet in Medieval paintings and sculptures representing St. George overcoming the dragon or Jesus and Mary (Plate XXIV, XXV, XXVI and XXVII). It is no wonder that we have this form as a favourite even in Western art as, in all probability, the source of both is from the earliest representations in early classical art of Europe. The Roman influences found at Amaravati are clear in one form or the other of the Greco-Roman motifs that occur here and there, particularly in the Greek style of drapery for certain feminine figures, the cornucopia in the hand of a female attendant in the royal court, the Roman boy with a horn in hand from Nagarjunakonda, the Bacchanalian *Mithuna* scenes that sometimes are Greek in character and so forth. This particular motif of a chaplet held on high over the hero of an occasion is probably one of the most telling instances of the fruitful absorption of cultural motifs from the west in the east.

A devise of the Amaravati sculptor to distinguish good and bad folk as they occur in the narration of stories is to make the bad one appear ugly, stunted, pot-bellied, gnomelike, while the good one is of normal proportions, pleasant and attractive. In the scene of the *Mahilāmukhajātaka* where the elephant Mahilāmukha is taught virtue, the story is again synoptically presented, but the synopsis is so great that it almost confuses ; it is only the knowledge of the device of the Amaravati sculptor that could help one to understand it. The king wonders why his good-natured animal is suddenly unruly. The wise Bodhisattva, his councillor, discovers the cause by his own uncanny method. He observes the elephant to be quiet and docile listening to the talk of good people while it is unruly when it listens to low and vulgar folk. The king honoured greatly the Bodhisattva who could understand the mind of even an animal by minutely watching his movements. In this very interesting panel from Amaravati in the Madras Museum (Plate XXVIII), there are two sets of people presented on either side of the elephant, the normal-shaped good folk and the abnormal ugly-looking, dwarfish wicked folk. This devise helps the sculptor to effectively present in small compass, almost in *sūtra* form, the story, that would have required several lengthy scenes for depiction.

This method of presenting the wicked one as physically deformed is also to be observed in the story of Udayana and Sāmāvatī, where Māgandiyā's uncle, her wicked counsellor, is at once recognised in successive panels by his ugly pot-bellied dwarfish appearence (Plate XXIX). Here again the synoptic mode which is a favourite with the Amaravati sculptor accounts for the *vīṇā* in the chair near Udayana appearing with a snake beside it on which both Māgandiyā and her uncle have their attention focussed. In this bit of the scene both the plot of Māgandiyā and her uncle to put the snake in the hole of the belly of the *vīṇā* and stopping it with flowers as well as the

pulling out of the flowers to allow the reptile to come out with fury to excite Udayana into taking his bow to shoot Sāmāvatī is compressed as an incredible synopsis.

The sweet charm of Sāmāvatī with her hands folded in *añjali,* her heart flowing out with love and honour for her husband, is in contrast with the fury of Udayana, whose attitude of *ālīḍha* depicts him as an unrivalled archer in anger standing in warrior pose to do his worst, and no wonder the *kubjās* and *vāmanikās* of the harem crouch in fear at the feet of the prince, between him and the sweet-natured Sāmāvatī, who is suffused with affection for all. This is as much as to say, in the words of the chisel of the Amaravati sculptor, that even the arrow of Udayana, that could not shoot, knew her greatness and would not get discharged from the bow, thus teaching the king a great lesson on the nobility of his wife, which he could hardly understand, though a human being endowed with discrimination and knowledge. Both the panels on the upright in the Madras Museum and the one from the British Museum have similar tale to offer, and the sculptor's devise is obviously most suggestive.

The story of the celestial nymph Rohiṇī Khattiyakannā from *Dhamma-padaṭṭhakathā* represented by the Amaravati sculptor is another instance of his special devise in depicting a situtation . In the sculptural piece from the Madras Museum (Plate XXX) one can see first the celestial nymph with whom four gods are infatuated and all of them are pressing hard and even coercing her into accepting one of them, all of them quarrelling among themselves, and one of them actually is carrying her away to Śakka. Śakka is shown seated in his Vaijayantīprāsāda with the lovely damsel behind him. This story of how each of the four gods desired to possess her and quarrelled over her, went to Śakka to decide the dispute, and how, at his instance each one confessed the depth of his longing for her, and realizing, from what Śakka stated, that his passion was the utmost, presented her to him and departed, so that she became his favourite nymph, is here synoptically shown again and suggestively. The ruffian gods and the celestial nymph are repeated twice, first each one beseeching her and almost pulling her, next quarrelling amongst themselves and one of them carrying her away. Śakka's palace *pasada vejayanta* the mansion of glory , is suggested by rows of lights on either side as a mansion all ablaze.

This method appealed so much that the Nagarjunakonda sculptor has repeated it in almost identical way, and thus included this rare story among the others that are oftener represented in panels composing an embellishment of the stūpa.

This mode of representing the carrying away by ruffians of a woman, who detests such violence shown to her, is repeated again by the Amaravati sculptor in another context in the story of Bodhikumāra and his wife (Plate XXXI).

The Bodhisattva and his wife having lived for a while as householders, distributed all their wealth, became recluses, and coming to Banaras, took their abode in the royal park. The king, who had come there to make merry, was so smitten with love for that beautiful woman that he asked the Bodhisattva about her and queried what he would do if she were carried off by force. The monk quietly replied that though she was formerly his wife when he was a householder she was no more anything to him now, and all that he would do would be to quench his anger while yet it was small. The king ordered his men to carry her off to his palace. Coming again back to the park he found the monk not in the least disturbed over this. Returning to the palace hurriedly the king sent for the woman and honoured her greatly. But she spoke to him only on the great spirit of renunciation. The king was so pleased, that he restored the woman to the monk in the park, invited them both to stay there and honoured them greatly. A sculpture from Amaravati representing the story depicts again ruffians carrying away the woman by force. She is next shown in the king's palace speaking words of wisdom to the ruler.

The power of suggestion of the sculptor of Amaravati has helped him so much that he has always devised his own methods to make his representation significant. In the scene of the story of Janapadakalyāṇī Rūpanandā, the beautiful wife of Nanda, Buddha, who realised that though become a nun she was still thinking of her great beauty, and desirous of humbling her and teaching her a lesson, resorted to the use of beauty of form to kill her pride, even as a thorn is used to remove another thorn. He created by his supernatural power a young woman of surpassing beauty gaily clad and decked in jewels with a fan in her hand ; within a while this damsel become a middle aged woman and finally an old hag full of disease who soon was dead, and her corpse presented an woeful sight. This so disgusted Rūpanandā that she realised the impermanence of beauty. In the sculpture (Plate XXXII) the lay disciples are all shown on one side and several nuns on the other ; though fully robed, their slim bodies, waists and broad hips suggest them as women. The woman, standing beside Buddha, fan in hand, similarly robed, is so surpassingly beautiful, that it is probably to suggest that if even one so draped in monk's robes is so exceedingly lovely, how much greater would be her beauty if she wore the more elegant dress of a lay woman. This is to show greater beauty than Rūpanandā in her own ground, her own station and garb, a fine devise of the sculptor.

There is a marvellous medallion from Amaravati in the British Museum representing the scene of Rāhula being brought to meet Buddha in the harem of the palace at Kapilavastu (Plate XXXIII). The women are all there including the *kubjā* and *vāmanikā*, and the *kañchuki*, so characteristic of royal households, and Yaśodharā is there while the young boy Rāhula is presented to the Master. There are two important things to be noted in this medallion apart

from everything else, the lotuses that spring up to receive Buddha at every step as he moves along and the toy figures of elephants and horses on wheels yet lying strewn all over. This breathes the greatest pathos; the sculptor hereby suggests that a great prince and accustomed to most delicate life was Buddha walking on a bed of roses as it were who had now chosen the hard life of asceticism. The lotuses are suggestive. It is to this kind of life that Rāhula is admitted by the father, the monk; the pathos is heightened by the fact that the child is still playing with the toys, animals moving on wheels. *Kshīrakaṇṭhaka* is the *bālaka,* the child has yet the milk in his throat. This is a telling sculpture and the device is most marvellous.

It is this that has inspired the sculptor at Goli to elaborate the theme in the panel here (Plate XXXIV). It does not stop only with the toys around but actually the children are playing leap-frog and other games even in spite of the presence of the great Master, for children after all are children and they have a world of their own.

In the scene of the interpretation of Māyā's dream, the soothsayers who are fed and queried by King Śuddhodana promise the two possibilities of the child becoming either the universal monarch or the supremely Enlightened One (Plate XXXV). The reply to Śuddhodana's query is represented by the sculptor in the significant *mudra* of the hand of the soothsayers where two fingers in almost *kartarīmukha* attitude suggests their answer. This becomes such a favourite device that whether at Amaravati or at Nagarjunakonda or Gummididurru or anywhere else, this is the only way of depicting this scene.

The visit of Śuddhodana to Māyā in the Aśoka grove in the Amaravati medallion (Plate XXXVI) suggests the wish of the pregnant queen that the king should visit her in that grove; and the king who loved her dearly would not allow her desire unfulfilled even normally and particularly when she was in that state. That the queen is big with child is here suggested by sparse ornamentation, her attendants presenting her jewels take out of jewel boxes and vieing with one another in trying to satisfy her every little wish, and the king himself present here suggests the idea that Kālidāsa so well puts in the context of the pregnant Sudakshiṇā; *sarīrasādādasamagrabhūshaṇā mukhena sālakshyata lodhra-pāṇḍunā tanuprakāśenā vichēyatārakā prabhātakalpāśaśineva śarvarī upetya sā do-hadaduhkhaśīlatām yadeva vavre tadapaśyadāhṛitam. Raghuvamsa,* III, 2 & 6. Sparse of ornaments because of her emaciated body and with her face pale like the *lodhra* flower she looked like the night at day-break dim-lit with only a few disappearing stars. He saw to it that whatever was desired by her as she approached the period of longing in pregnancy was brought for her. This importance stage in a woman's pregnancy is a great theme for poets, and the sculptor has presented it in a manner all his own.

The scene is repeated centuries later at Barabudur and here again it is as effective as at Amaravati. The only difference is in the vehicle used by the king to reach the grove, the elephant at Barabadur, replacing the horse at Amaravati (Plate XXXVI). The theme is a favourite and occurs more than once in Amaravati itself, another famous medallion exists in the British Museum collection of Amaravati sculpture.

A frieze from Amaravati in the Madras Museum represents the enjoyment of Siddhārtha in three palaces built by his father who desired to keep his son ignorant of the ills of life around. The prince is in the harem amidst women enjoying life. One of the ladies offers him wine which is suggestive of the life of pleasure to which he was encouraged by his father. The prince fondly holds three cords and ponders over them, one of them still dangling and not held up like the rest (Plate XXXVIII). The cords are repeated in the third scene, where the prince, seated with his wife, listens to music, with soldiers on all sides (Part XXXIX). This is a suggestion of the pleasure palaces provided by king Śuddhodana, and the strong guard around the harem, wherein the prince was almost shut up, unaware of the miseries of the world, and where existed only the sweeter aspect of life amidst music and dance and women. The three cords probably signify *tanha*, *rati* and *rāga*, the three lusts personified as Māra's daughters, whom later as Buddha, he overcame, but who now held him in their grasp.

In the story of Mittavindaka the unfortunate one from the *Lossa jātaka*, the poverty and misfortune of Mittavindaka is marvellously presented (Plate XL). His miserably poor wife is the only woman in Amaravati sculpture who is so bereft of ornamentation and whose headgear even is absolutely plain without the least decoration. Their new born babies slowly growing up, the woman cooking, and the boys eating in the vicinity of miserable huts, is all enough significant presentation of poverty, but the misfortune of Mittavindaka is probably even more meaningfully told by the drying up of the tank, tellingly shown by the elephant moving with difficulty in the mire. The animal belongs to the retinue of officers of the king, whose anger fell on these villagers, just because of the ill-luck of Mittavindaka, who came to live with them.

In the story of *Sarvamdadāvadāna*, different from any known *jātaka* version, being an interesting variation from the story of Śibi in the *Mahābhārata*, preserved to us in the narration of the *Avadāna kalpalatā*, though the original is lost, the hunter is substituted for the hawk, who came to claim the bird or in lieu of it its equal weight of flesh from the body of the king himself. The cruel hunter Kālapingala and the king Sarvamdada are contrasted, and since no one would cut the flesh of the king, the king himself cuts his flesh like the noble elephant Chhaddanta his tusk, and finally gets into the scale himself. The scale here presented is not one with double pans but only with a single pan which

could not obviously take both the king and the dove. But still this early balance, the king in the attitude of cutting his own flesh, getting into the scale of the balance and sometimes a celestial being, with crown on head, moving away upwards towards heaven, suggest the story as of Sarvamdada (Plate XLI). The celestial being moving upwards is no other than Śakka who had come to test the king, and in other presentations of this *avadāna*, it is the balance of the scale that signifies the *jātaka*. It is a mere suggestion but it is enough to help identify the *jātaka*. It would not be out of place to mention that but for the Amaravati sculptor's representation of the *Sarvamdadāvadāna*, we could never know that the version of this story is earlier than the Christian era, since the original of the *Avadānakalpalatā* is lost.

In the depiction of the long story of Vidhurapandita the nobility of the great sage Vidhura is specially suggested by the humble way in which he submits himself to holding on to the tail of the horse of Punnaka as he flies towards the mansion of the Nāga queen (Plate XLII). Midway, on the mountain top the idiocy of Punnaka is pointedly suggested where he attempts to dash Vidhura on the ground to kill him and take his heart to the queen. The queen desired to have the heart of the sage, by which she meant only his great exposition of *dharma*, and not his physical heart taken out of his corpse. Finally the representation in a medallion at Amaravati of Vidhura in the centre seated as nobly as the enlightened Master himself, with the Nāga king and queen and princesses on either side, shows the high regard and respect accorded to the great seer for his expounding the great *dharma*. It is this special significant panel that is repeated again at Ajanta a few centuries later in almost identical form, as the scene is an inspiring one, and the sculptor has devised a perfect method (Plate XLIII).

In the *Dūtajātaka* at Amaravati (Plate XLIV) suggestion again plays a great part, but as the sculpture here is a fragment, it is the Nagarjunakonda panel that is more helpful (Plate XLV). The king is shown feeding on costly viands in the open, and the poor man who desires to taste from the royal table and who announces himself as a messenger, arrives and partakes of that food, and on being questioned declares himself a messenger from the Belly. The significant table laden with rich and dainty food in front of the king and the messenger from hunger kneeling before the ruler confessing himself guilty of greed is indeed again a very suggestive way of representing the theme.

Even in ordinary depiction of life, the Amaravati sculptor has his own suggestive mode of interpretation. The battle scene (Plate XLVI) with the elephant rider fighting a man on an elephant, the horseman fighting the cavalier, the charioteer his comrade in another chariot, and the foot-soldier an equal of his, is all as much as to say that it is a *dharmayuddha*, righteous warfare, where there is no room for *kūṭayuddha*. It is even as Kālidāsa puts it *pattiḥ padātim*

rathinam rathesas turangasādī turagādhirūḍham yantā gajasyābhyapatad gajastham tulyapratidvandvi babhūva yuddham, i.e., the foot-soldier attacked foot-soldier, the chariot soldier a charioteer, the horseman a cavalier, the soldier on elephant another so mounted, equally matched in the opponents there was the battle. *Raghuvamśa* VII, 37.

The suggestive mode of depiction at Amaravati has other very important examples in the story of the conversion of Nanda. The Sātavāhana sculptor makes a pointed reference first to Nanda's longing for his beautiful beloved one, who is made to watch from the terrace above, while Nanda, yet unsteady as a monk, though following the Buddha, looks back wistfully at his lovely wife (Plate XLVII).

The synoptical method is adopted. Nanda is repeated in the company of Buddha who leads him to heaven to show him the pink-footed celestial damsels. On the way they see the ugly monkey. And now Buddha asks Nanda how he appreciates the beauty of the monkey in relation to the beauty of his sweet-heart Janapadakalyāṇī Rūpanandā, and later again he asks him to compare the beauty of Janapadakalyāṇī with the celestial nymphs. Nanda realises that the difference in beauty between the celestials and his sweet-heart is just as much as between that of his lovely wife and the monkey.

The noteworthy thing in this sculpture is that first Nanda is represented as a prince, holding the bowl of Buddha in his hand, and turning back towards his wife, almost to reassure her that he would be back after going to Buddha's monastery and leaving him there; next it is Nanda in the garb of a monk dreaming only of his married life. The children pulling him by his garment, and his face turned towards the lovely damsel on the terrace, as he walks about in the street, suggest his dream of a happy married home with his lovely wife. Again Nanda is repeated, this time earnestly following Buddha to learn a great lesson by observing the monkey and the celestial nymphs. That the nymphs are celestial ones is conveyed again by the representation of these damsels against trees which are celestial ones like Kalpa, Mandāra and Pārijāta. This wonderful mode of depicting the celestials under divine trees, a method begun so early at Amaravati, persists in very late medieval sculpture also, and Gaṅgā on *makara* with the *Kalpa* creeper beside her running the whole length of a doorjamb in temples is a continuation of this theme. We have Gaṅgā in a marvellous Sena sculpture from Mahanad in Bengal represented with a water vessel in her hand standing under the *Kalpavriksha,* the *Kalpa* tree. This suggestive mode of depiction and the changing mood indicating different stages in the incident illustrate the subtle method and skill of the Amaravati sculptor.

The Nagarjunakonda episode of Nanda follows exactly the same course. But here the sculptor goes a step further (Plate XLVIII). He makes Nanda and Buddha fly, and that very motion suggests that they are soaring heavenward

to meet the pink-footed damsels. The other incident and the juxtaposition of the ugly one-eyed monkey and the pink-footed damsels pointedly draw attention to the great disparity in their loveliness and is very telling.

In another noteworthy sculpture, the division of the relics (Plate XLIX), the Amaravati sculptor has in a subtle fashion indicated the location of the scene. Learning through Ānanda of the Master's death the Mallas of Kuśināra greatly lamented and came to the Sāl grove with music and dance and with garlands and perfumes for performing his cremation ceremony. All this and the honour shown to Buddha with music, dance, garland and perfume for seven days is represented in the sculpture. The various kings who came to request a share of the bones of Buddha, and secured the relics at the instance of Droṇa, who preached peace and goodwill, is all clearly shown, but importance is given to the Mallas of Kuśināra in the most wonderful way by a mere suggestion. There are four dancers and the central one suggests the *alārippu* of modern Bharatanāṭya performance, just after the danseuse enters the stage. She carries a *pushpāñjali* or a handful of flowers in a *karaṇa* known as *Talapushpapuṭa*, strews them, bows to the gods and begins to dance. She is in the *Vaiśākharechitaka.* One of the movements of the hands in the *Patākahasta* (flag like) as they are brought inwards, shoulders, elbows and wrists on a level, has been well caught in the sculpture. The dancer in front of her is in the *Alīḍha sthāna,* which suggests both a warrior in action and a wrestler. This mode of suggestion by pun on the word which means the Malla tribe as well as "wrestler" is here noteworthy, the scene being laid in Kuśināra the seat of the Mallas. The hands are in *sukatuṇḍa* or *Kaṭakāmukhahasta* and suggests the drawing of an arrow or a bow. The *karaṇa* appears to be *Vyamsita* or a perplexing situation which is not infrequent in war. This is therefore most interesting from the point of view of a sculptural suggestion of the theme intended for the panel.

A fragment of sculpture from Amaravati which may normally escape attention is a dwarf Yaksha feeding an antelope and a leonine stag (Plate La). The latter is very docile for a lion and has drooping ears and long antlers, and, more than all, feeds on grass offered by the dwarf Yaksha. This is as much as to suggest the spirit of *ahimsā* in the life of the Bodhisattva.

A remarkable feature of the art of Amaravati is its assimilation and absorption of foreign elements and the reshaping of these in a pleasant Indian way unlike as in Gandhara or even at Mathura. While the garland as a decorative festoon does occur at Mathura, with little cherubs carrying it at intervals in exactly the same way as in Gandhara sculpture, which in turn follows the Greco-Roman original form without any great modification, the flower garland

itself at Amaravati is transformed into a huge rhizome issuing from the mouth of the *makara* or a colossal Yaksha (Plate LI) carried at intervals with an ease by seated or otherwise busy dwarf Yakshas in the earlier phase, while later it is the *mithuna* pair, a beautiful man and woman, lightly bearing the great burden of flowers, which form, as it were, a thick roll of flower petals with a perfume and probably also a roll of coins oozing out of the mouth of the *makara* being pulled by Śrī Lakshmī herself seated on a lotus (Plate LIIa) and passed on to the little dwarf followers of Kubera or the normal-sized celestial pair who carry the burden (Plate LIIb). The idea is still there of the creeper *kalpa-vallī* issuing from the mouth of the celestial elephants as at Bharhut, but the foreign element of the garland carried by little cherubs is so modified by the Amaravati sculptor that, while an alien influence is just noticed, it is completely veiled by great transformation, possible only by a Master sculptor of great inventive skill.

Similarly the griffins, the water-horses, the sea-elephants, the winged horses, the twin animals on pillar capitals with or without wings, the sphinx-like objects and all such creations of fancy, though often borrowed from Greco-Roman sources, have greatly shed their foreign character and have become Indianized. The Amaravati sculptor here has thought over these so much, that he has, in his turn, made them logical, even in their sequence and in the places they occur. The winged animals are always placed by him on the capitals of pillars, and the animals of fancy, like sea horse with hind quarters of the fish, have been relegated to the bottom of the pillar just above the *pūrna-kalaśa* motif, to suggest their acquatic association, just as the winged ones suggest their heavenward movement with the help of the pinions. The earlier Jaggayyapeta sculptures depicting the winged and fish-tailed fancy animals are the precursors in this tradition (Plate LIII a & b).

A sculpture of immense interest from the Amaravati collection of the British Museum has been identified as Buddha's crossing of the river Nerañjarā (Plate LIV). Dr. Vogal has in this context very beautifully explained the circumambulatory flight of the geese over the river, the trees on either bank, the foot prints from one side to the other over the stream, and a hand from a tree extended as if to help someone to come up to the shore. The Nāgā Kālika and others are shown adoring the Buddha represented by feet. Well read in literature, the sculptor of the time could just thereby follow the foot-steps of *dhvani* or suggestion, and in the words of Kālidāsa, *vanadevatākara-talair āparvabhāgotthittaih* with hands arising from the clumps, welcome Buddha and help him to climb ashore even as Aśvaghosha has described it in his *Buddha-charita*. This is very suggestive rendering of how Buddha crossed the river Nerañjarā, even the trees on the bank bending forward as it were to lend a hand to help him come up to the shore. No other except the master at Amaravati could conceive and execute a sculpture of this suggestive quality.

One of the most interesting transformations of foreign motifs at Amaravati is the presentation of a crown by celestials fluttering above, to proclaim a great deed like that of Siddhārtha renouncing the world, already discussed in an earlier part of this paper. It would be interesting to see how a motif occurring both in early Greek and Roman sculpture in a different way has presented itself in a symbolical composition; the winged goddess of victory Nike flying over the conqueror's chariot holding out a crown of leaves on early Greek coins as for instance the ones from Syracuse or Sicily like the Decadrachma of Syracuse or still earlier coins from Sicily (Plate L-b); the earth Goddess placing the oak crown on the emperor's head while Roma sits on a throne beside Augustus in Juma Augusta a famous Augustan came from Vienna that represents Roman work. In European art of the middle ages, St George killing the dragon has sometimes an angel shown flying forward to crown him, while a hand from Heaven blesses him. St. George the bringer of victory, a painting of the 15th—16th centuries from the collection Korin in Moscow, presents this theme very vividly. About the same time probably in the Maulins Cathedral there is the altar piece representing the Virgin and Child with angels above crowning her. It is the central panel of Maulins triptych. Madonna from the Municipal museum at Padua by Girolama Romanini and Madonna and Child with saints and angels by Fra Bartholomew from the Cathedral Lucca wherein the angels crown the Madonna are all examples in 15th—16th century works in a style which is seen at its best at Amaravati in the 2nd century A.D. We do not know how a close parallelism exists between the medieval mode of representation in Europe and the Amaravati type. The earlier way of crowning the Victor was not as close to the type adopted at Amaravati as the later is. There may have been mutual influences, influence from the West first and the type travelling again westward, but we cannot be too dogmatic. The assimilation of foreign elements at Amaravati has been so subtle that the motifs are not so nakedly alien as at Gandhara; or in the main still appearing as foreign elements with certain slight modification as at Mathura in Kushāṇa art. At Amaravati every motif has its own distinctiveness and individuality. It is this great quality and the suggestive element and narrative mode of representation for which the Amaravati sculptor is noted (Plate LV & LVI) and his art has inspired successive generations of sculptors and painters not only in India but even abroad, particularly in South East Asia, where Barabadur stūpa has quite a number of instances to proclaim its indebtedness to the great Sātavāhana art of Eastern Deccan.

A

Agni, 2, 4.
ahimsa, 15
Ajanta, 3, 4, 6, 13
alārippu, 15
ālidha, 4, 6, 9, 15
amaṅgala, 5
Amaravati, 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17
Ananda, 15
Angels, 7, 8
Angulimāla, 2, 5
añjali, 9
antelope, 7, 15
arahat, 3
Asoka (Grove), 11
Asvagosha, 16
Augustun, 17
Augustus, 17
avadāna, 13
Avadānakalpalata, 12, 13

B

bālaka, 11
Balawaste, 3
Banaras, 5, 10
Barabudur, 12, 17
Bartolommeo, Fra. 17
Bengal, 14
Biccavolu, 7
Bharhut, 16
Bharatanātya, 15
Bhogavatī, 6
Bhuridatta, 6
Boar, 7
Bodhighara, 5
Bodhikumāra, 9
Bhodhisattva, 1 5, 8, 10, 15
Bouddhacarita, 16
Brahma, 2, 4
British Museum, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 16
Buddha, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16
Buddhist Art, 1
Buddhist Monuments, 2
Buddha, painting of, 3
Buddhist Texts, 1

C

Central Asia, 3
Central Asian Antiquities, 3
Chalukyan sculptures, 4
Chariot, 17
Chhaddanta, (elephant) 6, 7, 12
Chhanna, (charioteer) 7
Christian Era, 13
Coomaraswamy, 5
Crown, 6, 7, 13

D

Dance, 6, 12, 15
Deccan, 4
Deogarh, 7
Dhammapadatthakatha, 9
dharma, 4, 5, 13
dharmayuddha, 13
dragon, 8
Drona, 15
Dutajātaka, 3

E

Eastern Deccan
Elephant, 4, 8, 11, 12, 16
Europe, 8, 17

G

Gajendramokshada, 7
Gandhara, 15, 17
Gaṅga, (river) 14
Garuda, 6, 7
Ghantasala, 4
Girimekhala elephant of Mara, 4, 5, 7
Goli, 3, 11
Greco-Roman, 15, 16
Greco-Roman (motifs), 8
Greek Sculpture, 17
Greek (style), 8
Gummididurru, 11
Guptas, 4

H

Horse, 11, 12

I

India, 1
Indra, 6
Ikshvaku, 4

J

Jaggayapetta, 16
Jambudvipa, 6
Janapadakalyāni, See Rupananda
Jātaka, 1, 6, 12, 13
Java, 1, 4
Jesus, 8
Juma Augusta, 17

K

Kabandha, 4
Kālapingala, 12
Kālidāsa, 6, 11, 13, 16
Kālika, 16
Kalpa, 14
Kalpa (creeper) 14
Kalpa (tree) 14
Kalpavalli, 16
Kalpavriksha, 14
Kapilavastu, 7, 10
Kanchuki, 10
karana, 15
Kartarimukha, 11
katakamukhahasta, 15
Kirita, 6
Korin, 17
Krishna vallery, 4
Kshīrakanthaka, 11
Kubera, 16
kubjas, 9, 10
Kushāna (art), 17
Kushāna (period), 3
Kusinara, 15
kutayuddha, 13

L

lion, 5, 7
lodhra (flower) 11
Lossajātaka, 12
Lucca, 17

M

Madras Museum, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12
Madonna, 17
Magandiya, 8
Mahābhāratha, 12
Mahanad, 14
Mahilāmukha (elephant), 8
Mahilāmukhajātaka, 8
Mahishamardini, (Durga) 7
Mahishāsura, 7
makara, 14, 16
Makaradhvaja, 4
Mallas, 15
Mandāra, 14
Māndhāta, story of, 6
Māra, 4, 5, 12
Māradharshana (Amaravati) 4, (Ajanta), 4 (Ghantasala) 4, (N. Konda) 4
Maradharshana, 4
Māravadhūs, 4
Mary, 8
Master, 1, 2, 3, 5, 11, 13, 15 10, 16
Mathura, 15, 17
Maulins, 17
Maya, 11
Māyā's Dream, 11
Meru (mountain) 3
Mithuna, 8, 16
Mittavindaka, 12
Monks, 1, 3, 10, 11, 14
Monkey, 14, 15
Moscow, 17
mudra, 11
Municipal Museum (Padua), 17
Museum (Amaravati Site), 6
music, 6, 12, 15

N

Nāga (King), 6, 13
Nāga (Queen), 13
Nagarjunakonda, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14
Nalagiri, 1, 3
Nanda, 10, 14
Nanda, Conversion of, 14
National Museum, New Delhi, 3
Neranjarā (river) 16
Nike, 17

P

Pachchekabuddha, 5
Pādapītha, 4
Pallava sculptures, 4
Pārijāta, 14
pasada vejayanta, 9
Patākahasta, 15
Punnaka, 13
Pūrnakalaśa, 16
jivlushpña, 15

R

rāga, 12
Raghu, 6
Rāhula, 10, 11
Raghuvamsa, 11, 14
Rajagriha, 1
Rāmāyana, 4
rati, 12
Rāvaṇasabha, 5
relics, division of, 15
Rohiṇi Khattiyakannā, 9
Romanini, Girolma, 17
Roman sculpture, 17
Rudra, 2
Rupananda, 10
Rūpanandā, Janapadakalyani (W. of Nanda), 10, 14

S

sabhā, 5
Śakka, 9, 13
Śakra, 6
Sāl (groove), 15
Sāmāvatī, 8, 9
Sanchi, 4
sangha, 4
Sarnath, 4
Sarvamdada (King), 12, 13
Sarvamdadāvadāna (story) 12, 13
Satavahana, 1, 4, 14
Satavahana art, 17
Sculptor, 1, 2, 5, 13
Sculptor (Amaravati), 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17
Sculptor (Goli), 11
Sculptor (Nagarjunakonda), 9
Sculptor (Satavahana), 1, 4, 14
Sculptor (Vākātaka), 4
Sena sculpture, 14
Sibi, 12
Sicily, 17
Siddhartha, 7, 12, 17
Śiva, 4
Snake, 8
South East Asia, 4, 17
Sri (Lakshmi), 16
Srivatsa, 3
St. George, 8, 17
Stupa (Barabadur), 17
Subjugation of Angulimala, 2
Subjugation of Nalagiri (Ajanta) 3

S—*cont.*

Subjugation of Nalagiri (Amaravati), 1
Subjugation of Nalagiri (Goli), 3
Subjugation of Nalagiri (Nagarjunakonda), 3, 9
Sudakshinā, 11
Śuddhodhana, 11, 12
Sujata, 2
sukatunda, 15
Sūrya, 4
sūtra, 8
Syracuse, 17

T

Talapushpaputa, 15
tanha, 12
Temptation, Mara's, 5
throne, 6
triratna, 2, 3
turban, 5, 6, 7

U

udaremukha, 4
Udaremukha (motif), Ajanta, 4
udaremukha (motif), Amaravati, 4
udaremukha (motif), Ghantasala, 4
udaremukha (motif), Prambanan, 4
Udayana, 8, 9
Umbrella, 7

V

Vaijayantīprāsāda, 9
Vaiśākharecchitaka, 15
Vajra, 3
Vākāṭaka, 4
Vāmanikās, 9, 10
Vāsuki (serpent), 3
Vedas, 3
Vidhura, 13
Vidhurapandita, (story)
Vienna, 17
Viṇa, 8
Viratpurusha, 3
Virgin, 17
Vishṇu, 2, 4, 7
Viśvarūpa, 2, 3
Vogel, Dr., 16
Vyamsita, 15

W

Western art, 8

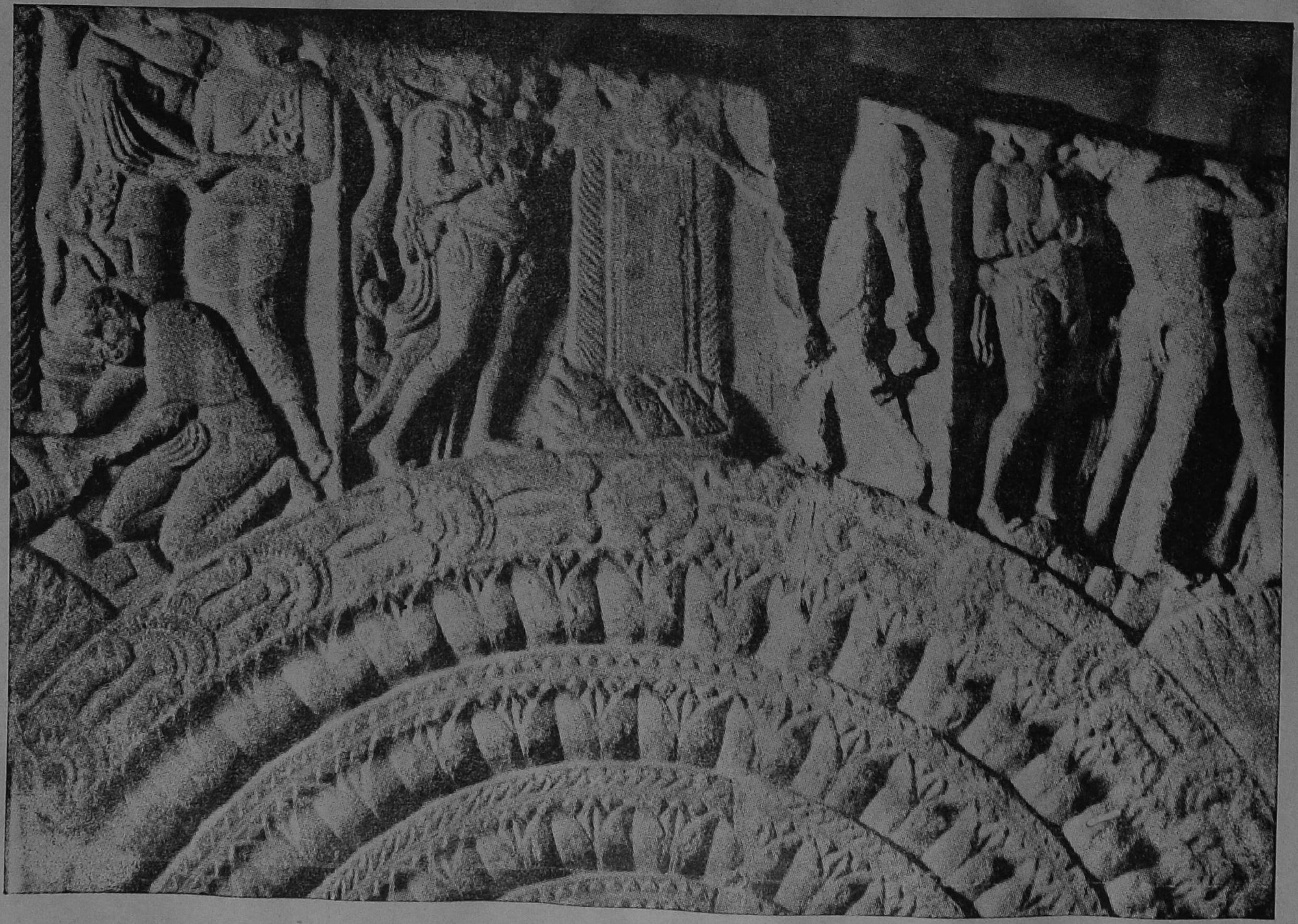
Y

Yaksha, 15, 16
Yasa, 2, 3
Yaśa, Conversion of, 2
Yaśodharā, 10

Plate No. I

257-4—1

Plate No. II.



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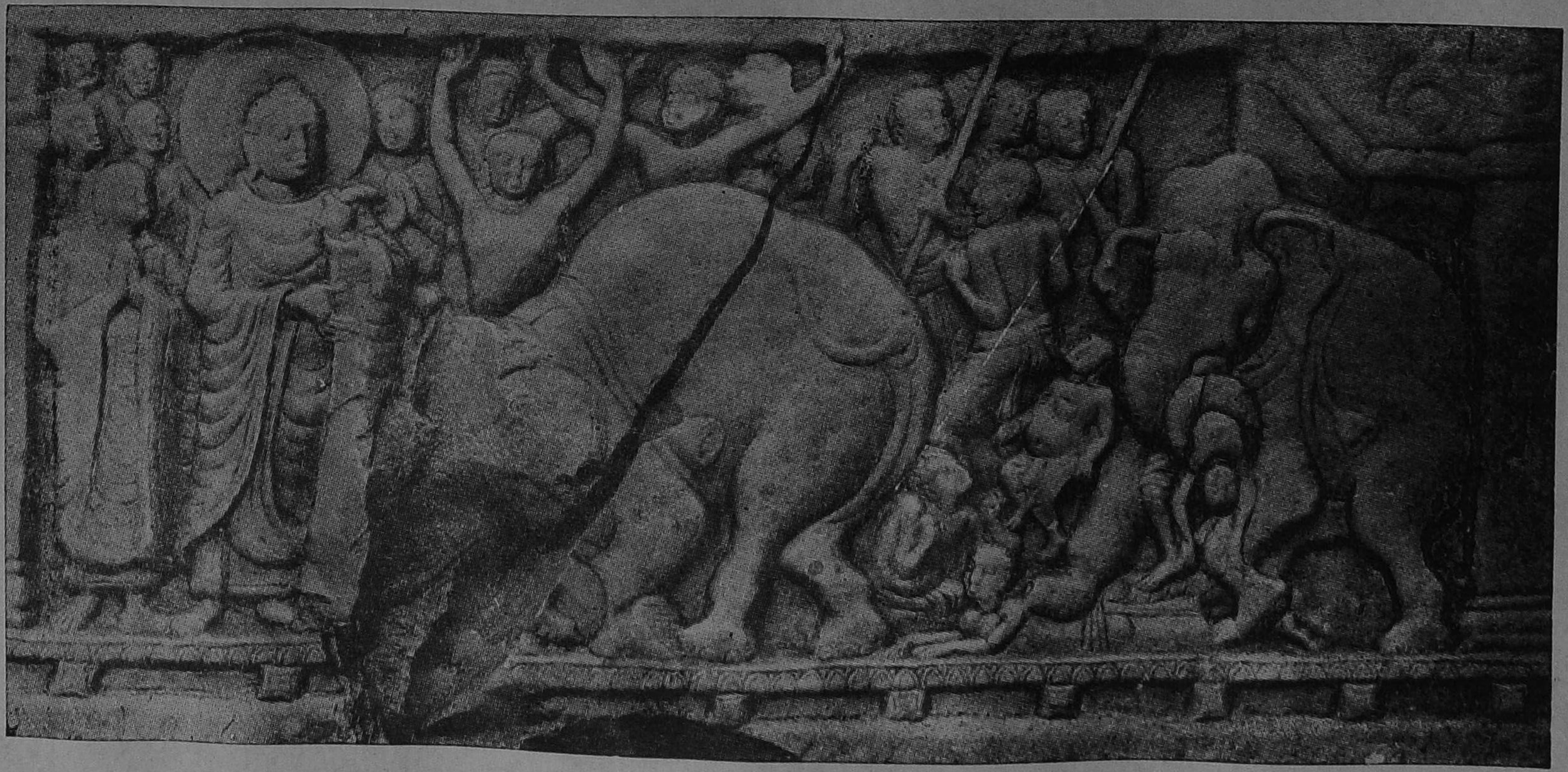


Plate No. IV

Plate No V

257-4—2

Plate No. VI

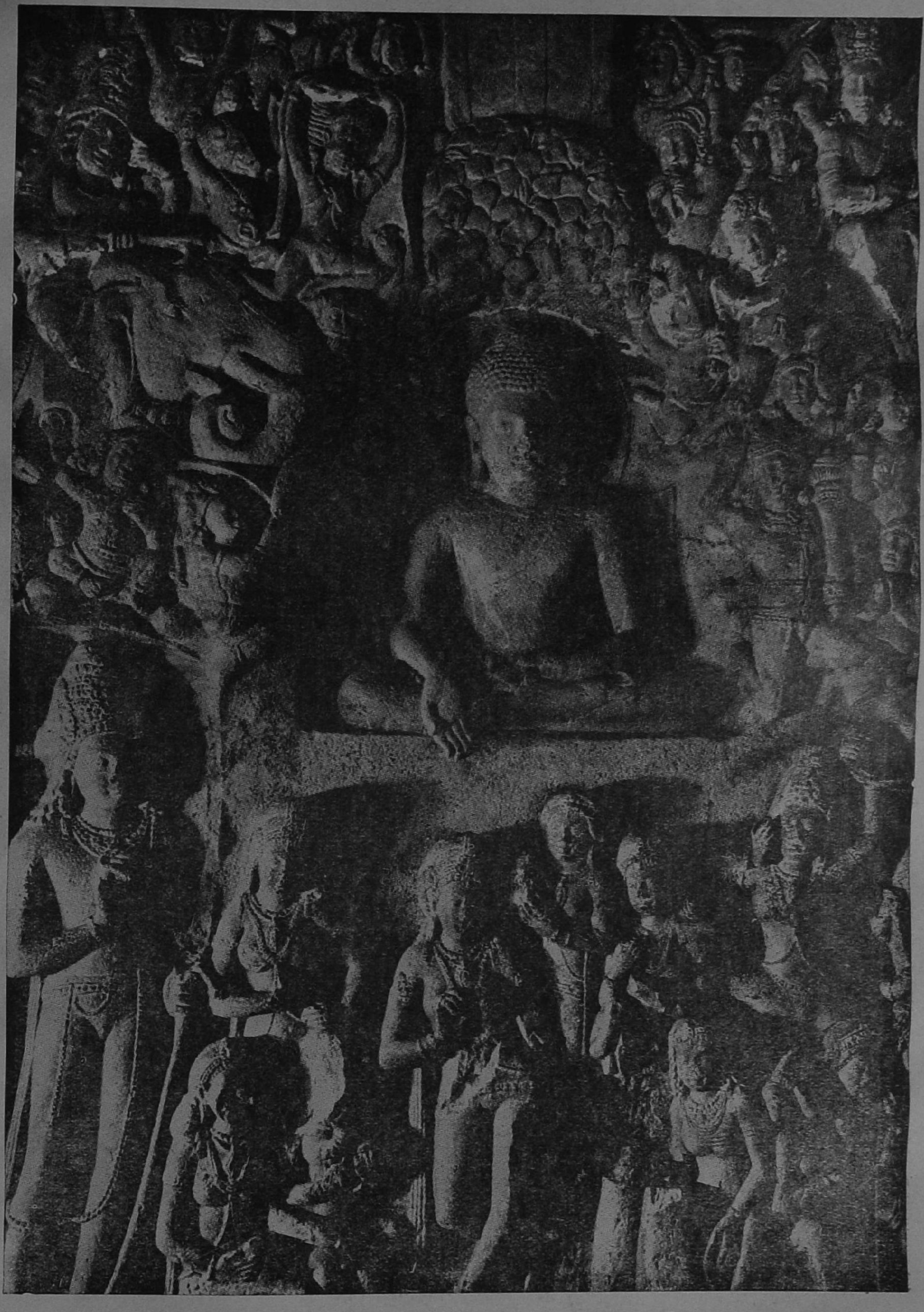
Plate No. VII

Plate No. VIII

Plate No. IX.

257-4--3

Plate No. X.



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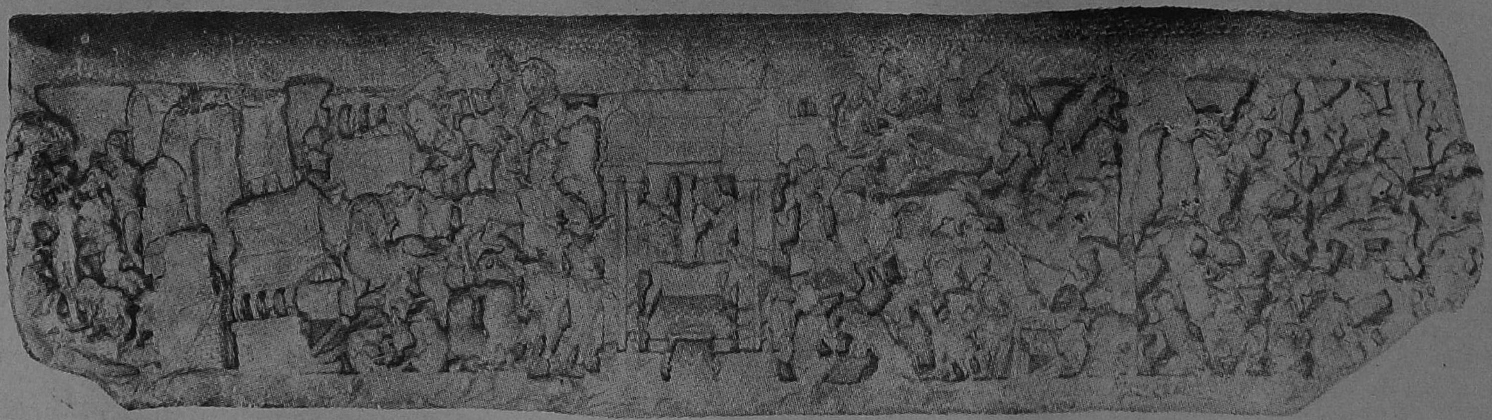

Plate No. XIII a.

257-4--4

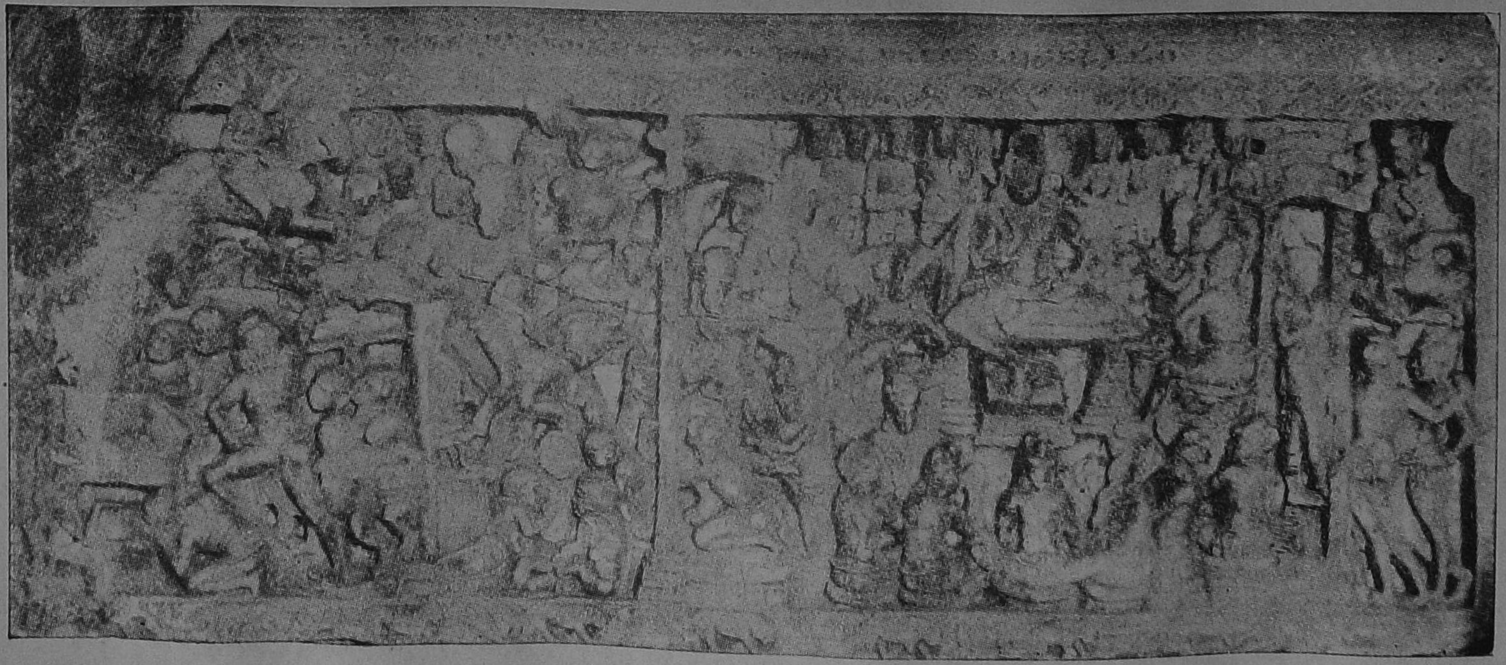

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Plate No. XIV.

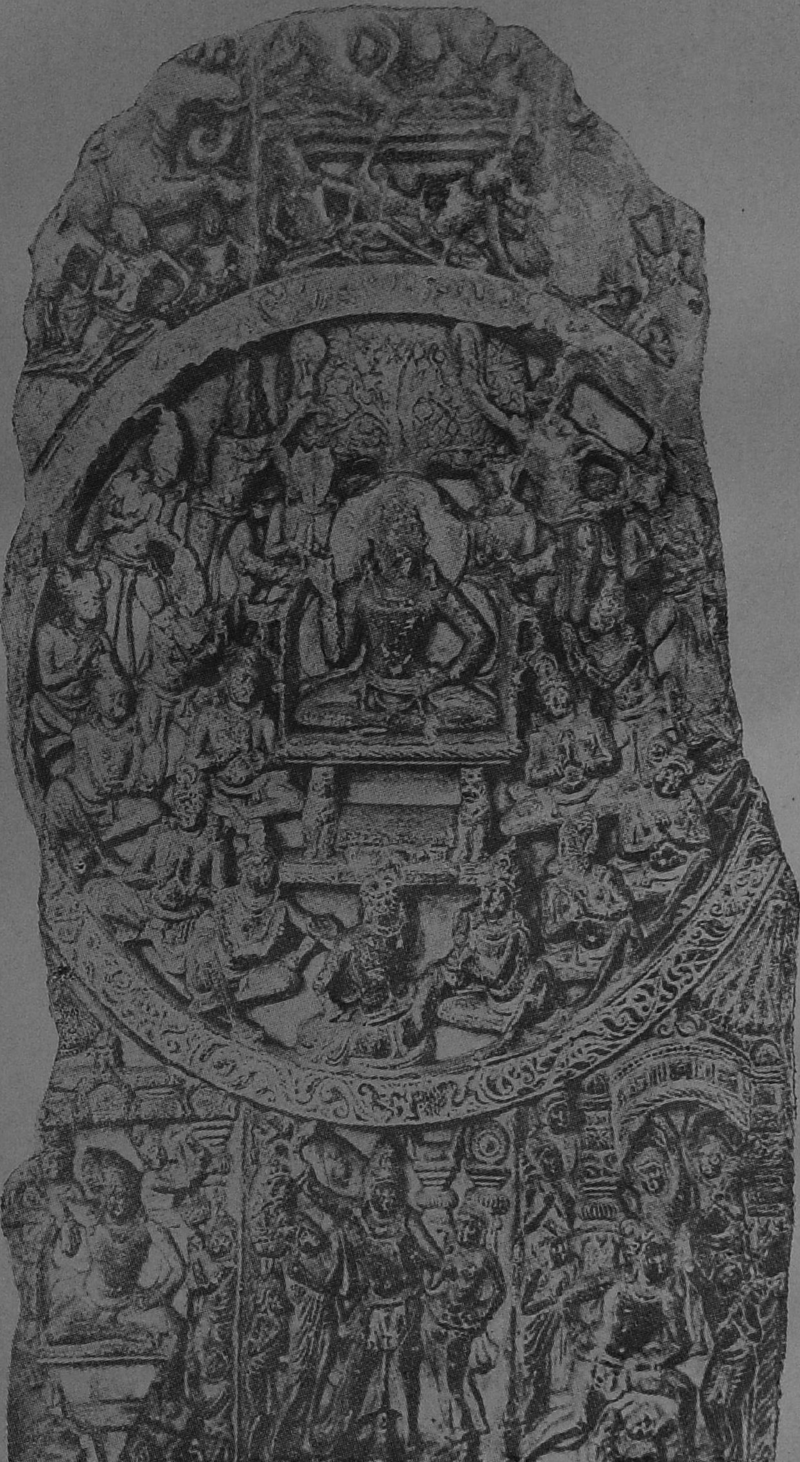

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Plate No. XVI

Plate No. XVII

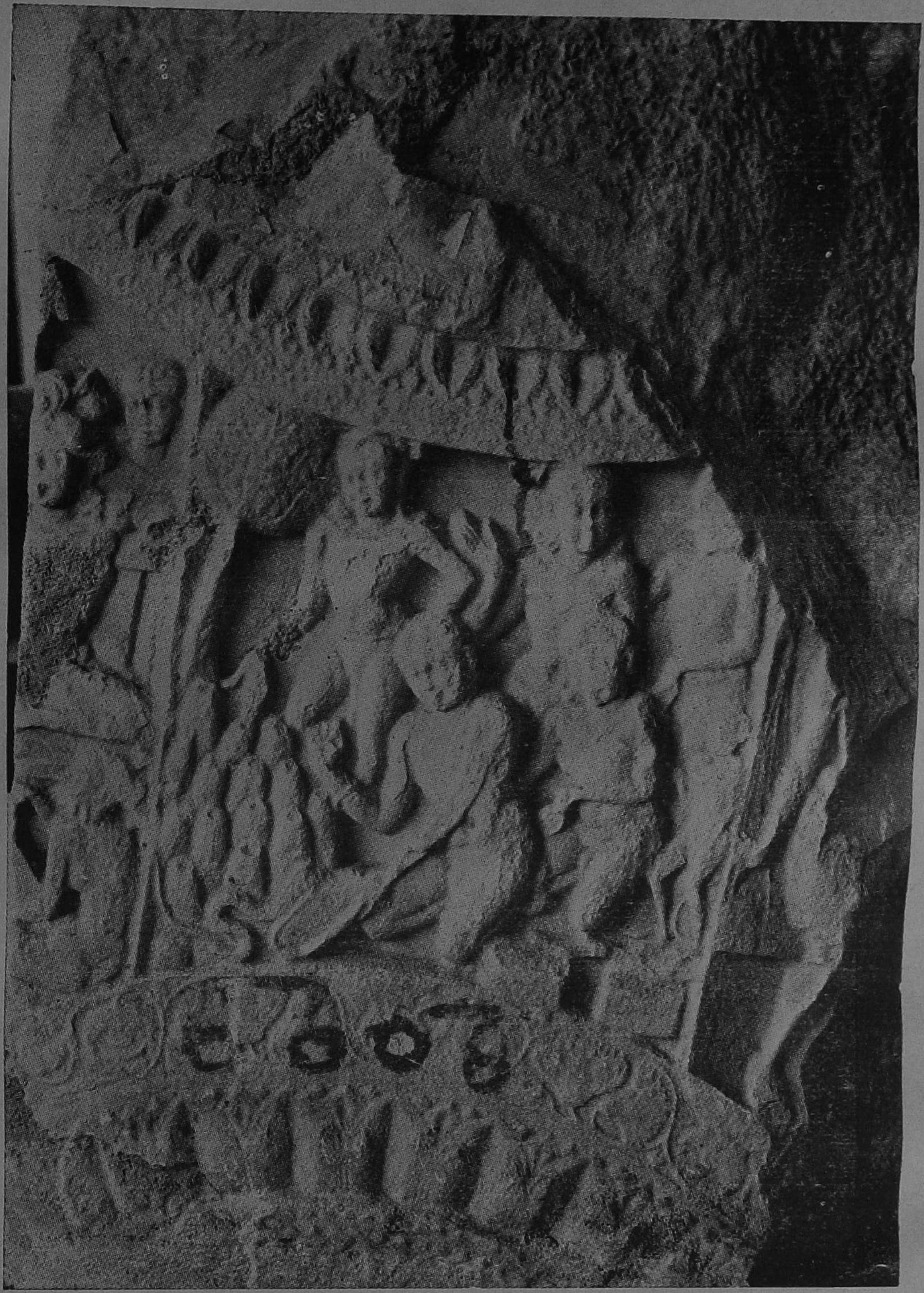

Plate No. XVIII

Plate No. XIX

Plate No. XX a.

Plate No. XX b

Plate No. XXIa

Plate No. XXI b

Plate No. XXII

Plate No. XXIII

Plate No. XXIV

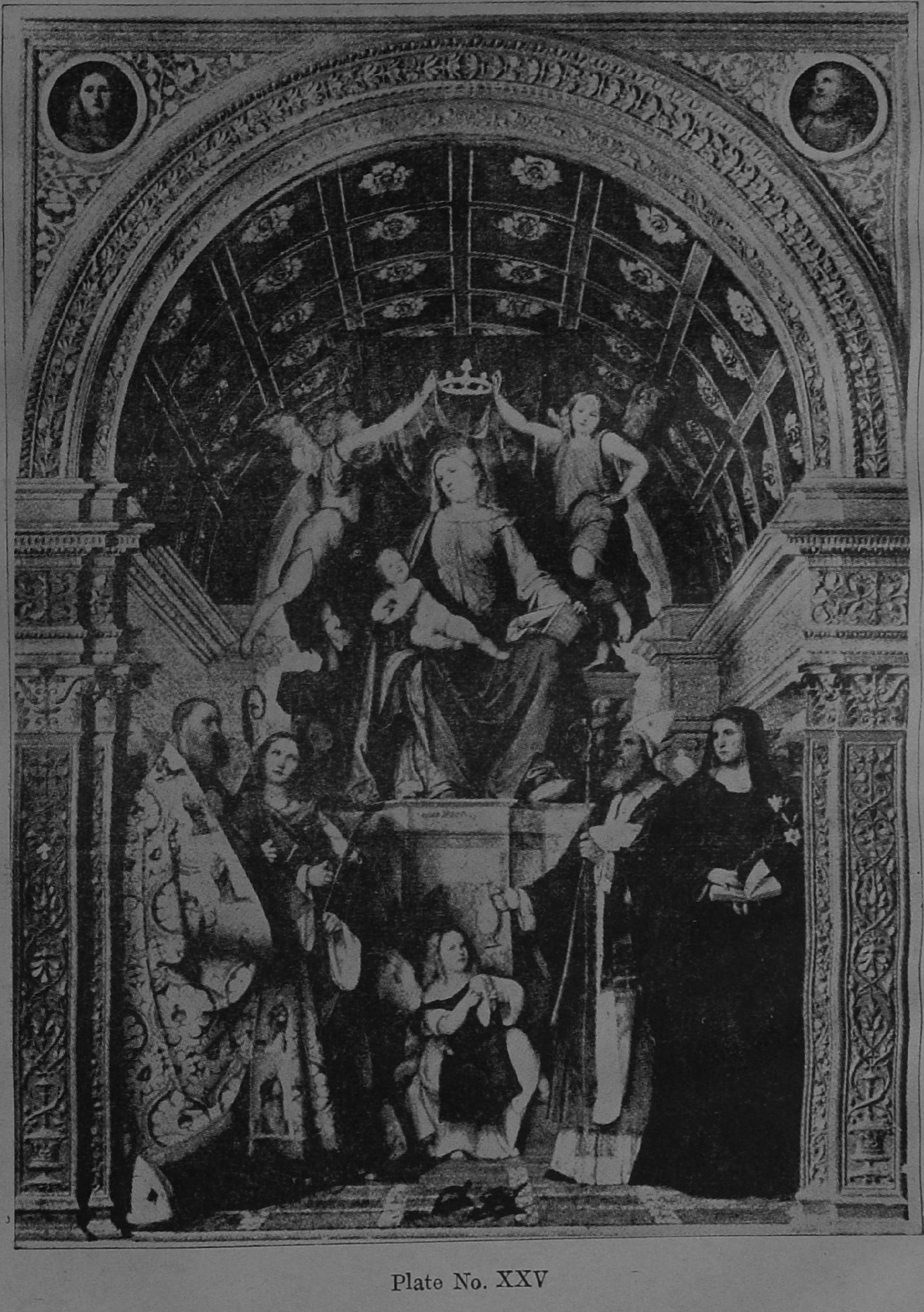

Plate No. XXV

Plate No. XXVI

Plate No. XXVII

Plate No. XXVIII

Plate No. XXIX

Plate No. XXX

Plate No. XXXI

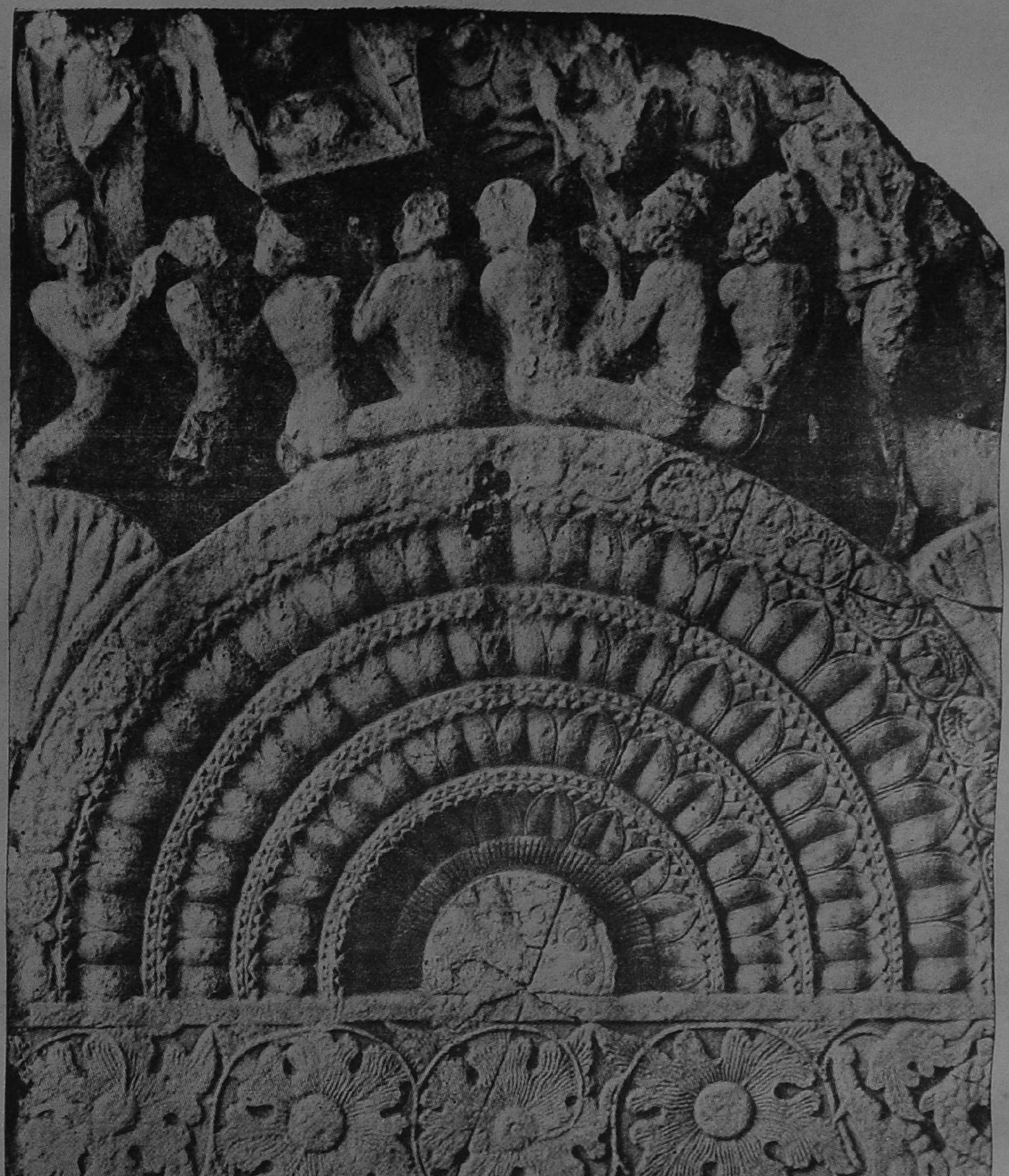

Plate No· XXXII

Plate No. XXXIII

Plate No. XXXIV

Plate No. XXXV

Plate No. XXXVI

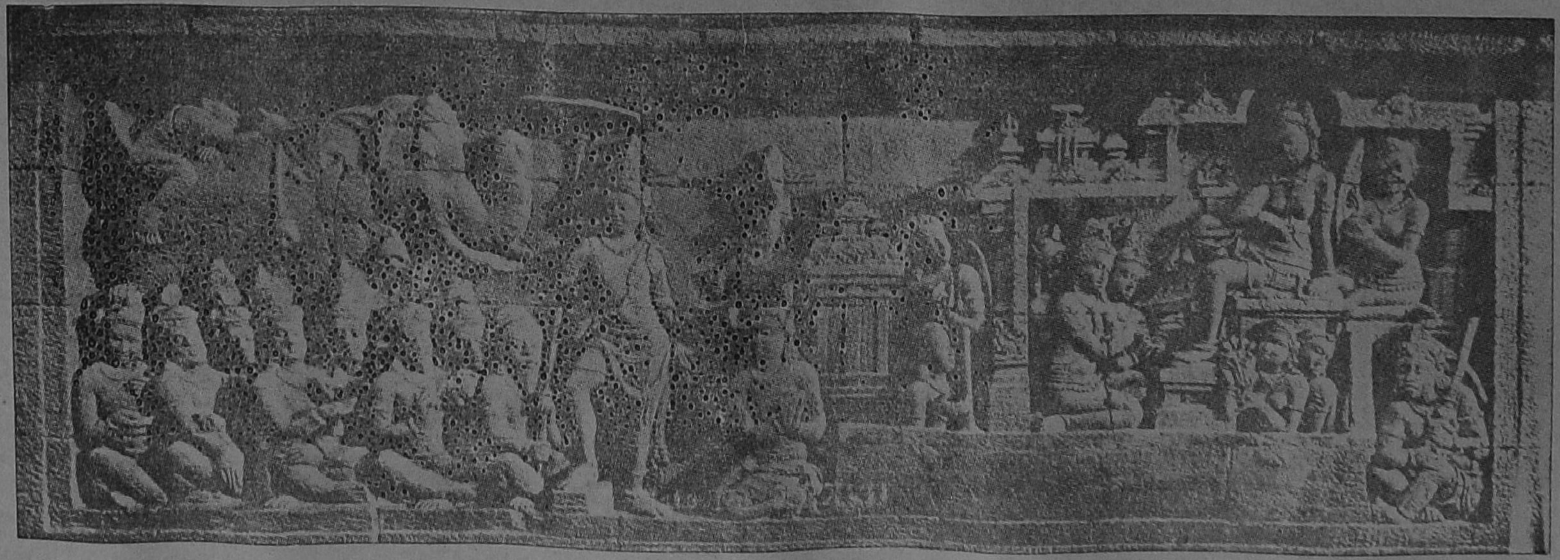

Plate No. XXXVII

Plate No. XXXVIII

Plate No. XXXIX

Plate No. XL

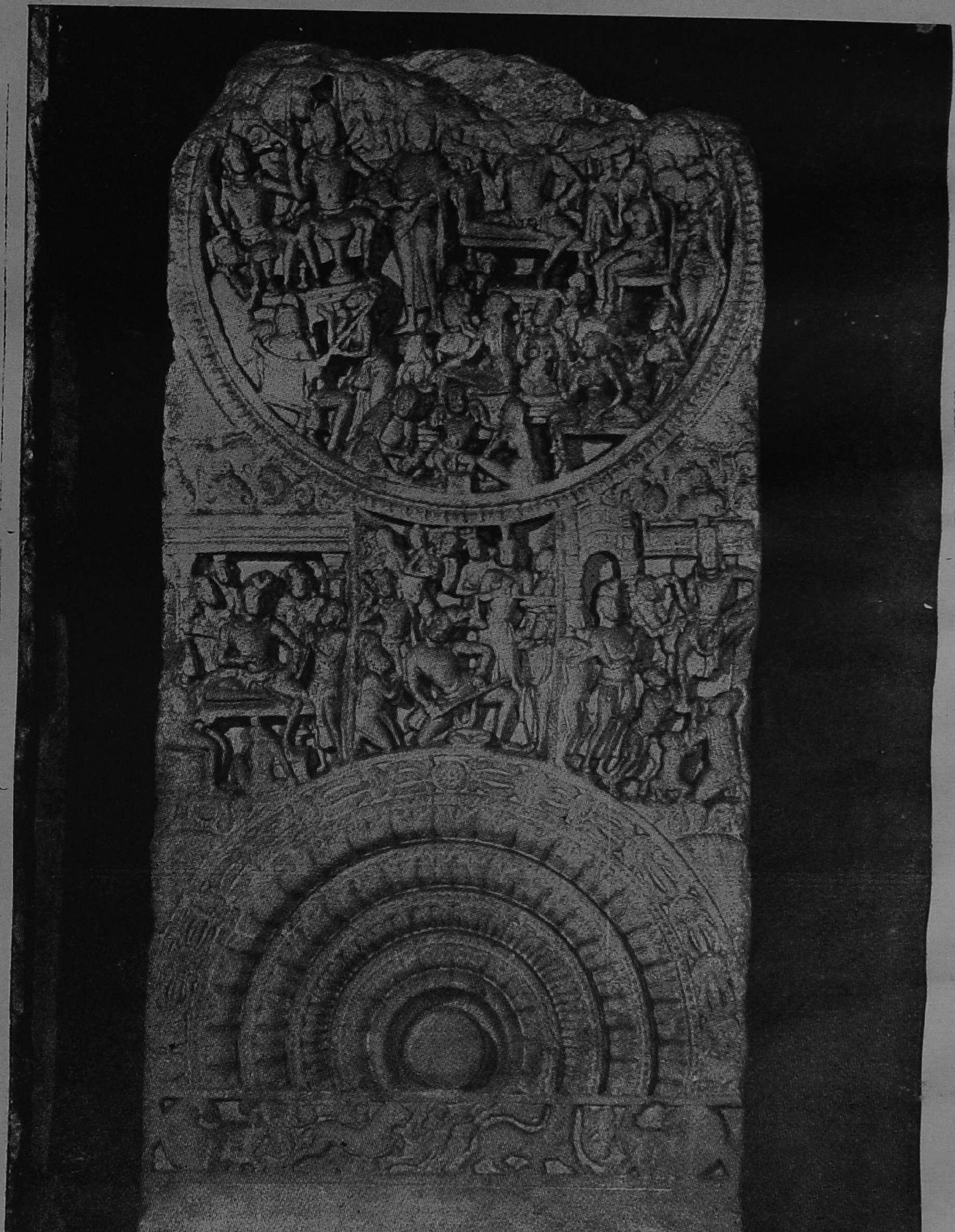

Plate No. XLI

Plate No. XLII*a*

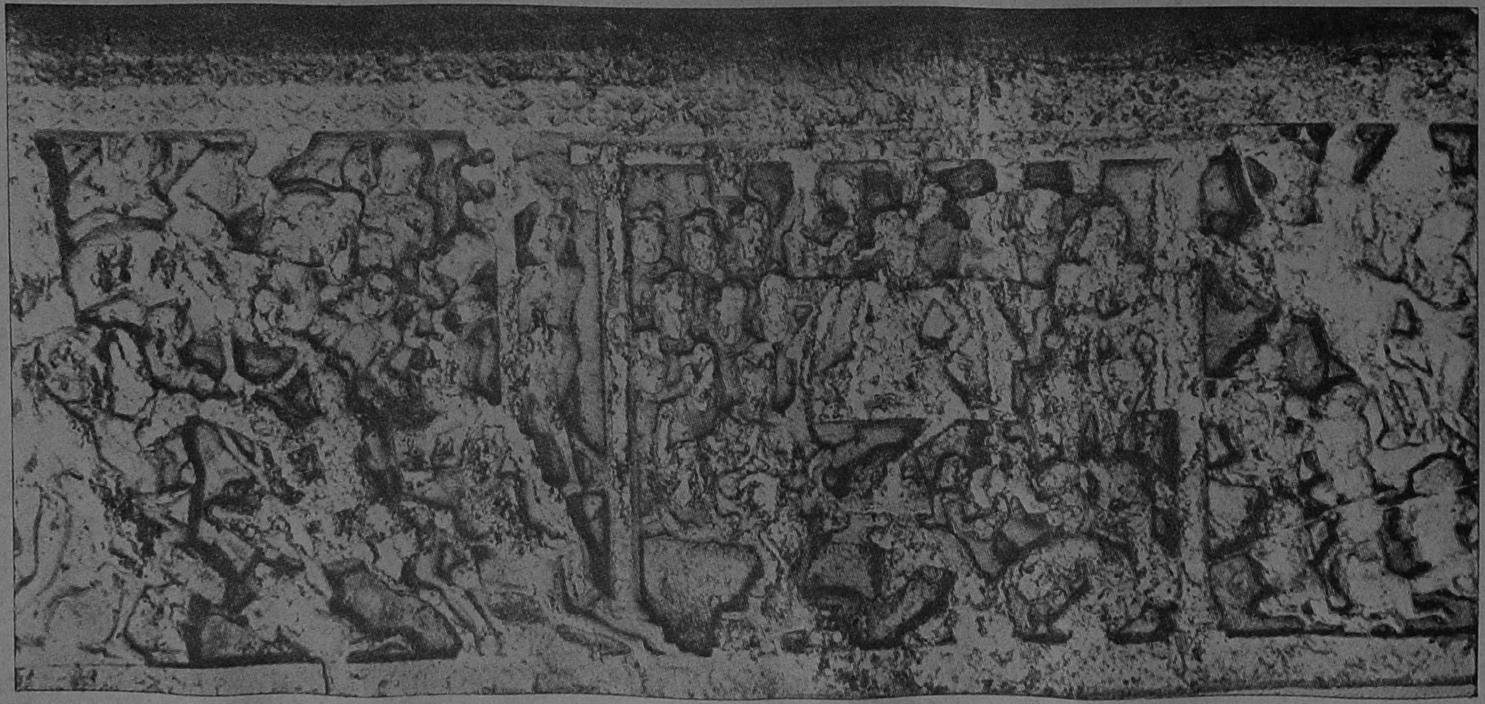

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Plate No. XLIII

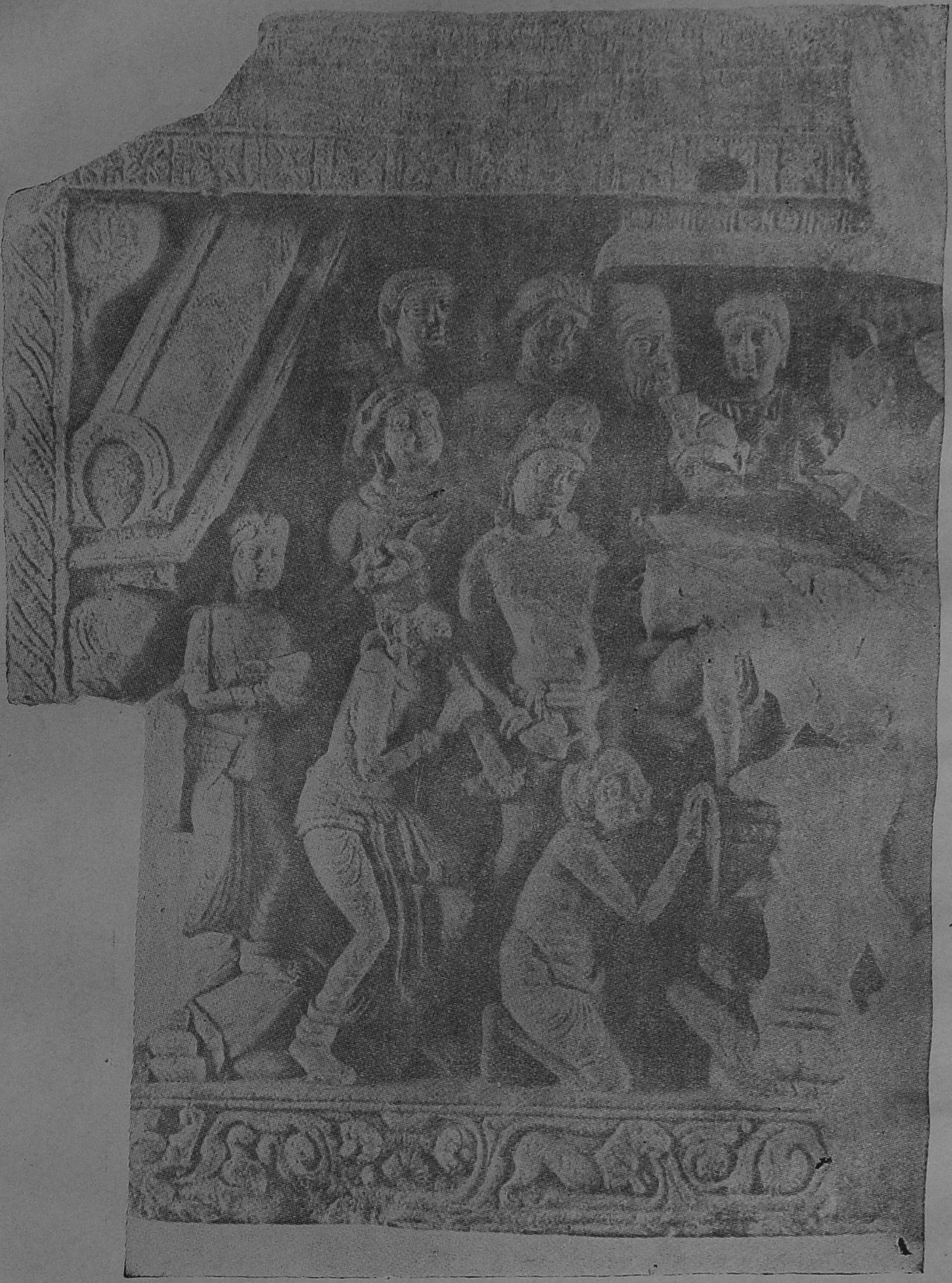

Plate No. XLIV

Plate No. XLV

257-4--13

Plate No, XLVI

Plate No. XLVII

Plate No. XLVIII

Plate No. XLIX

Plate No. L*a*

Plate No. L*b*

Plate No. LI

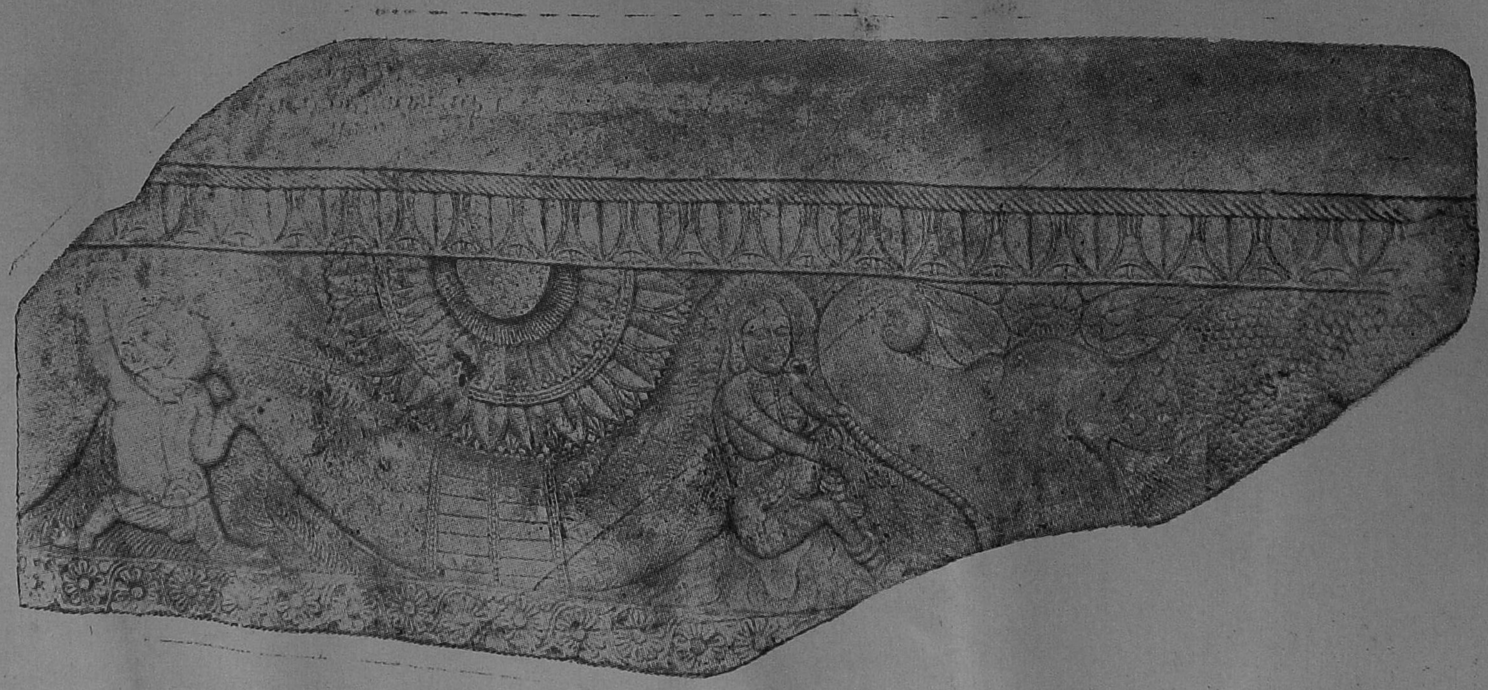

Plate No. LII*a*

257-4—15

Plate No. LII*b*

Plate No. LIIIa

Plate No. LIII*b*

257-4—16

Plate No. LIV.

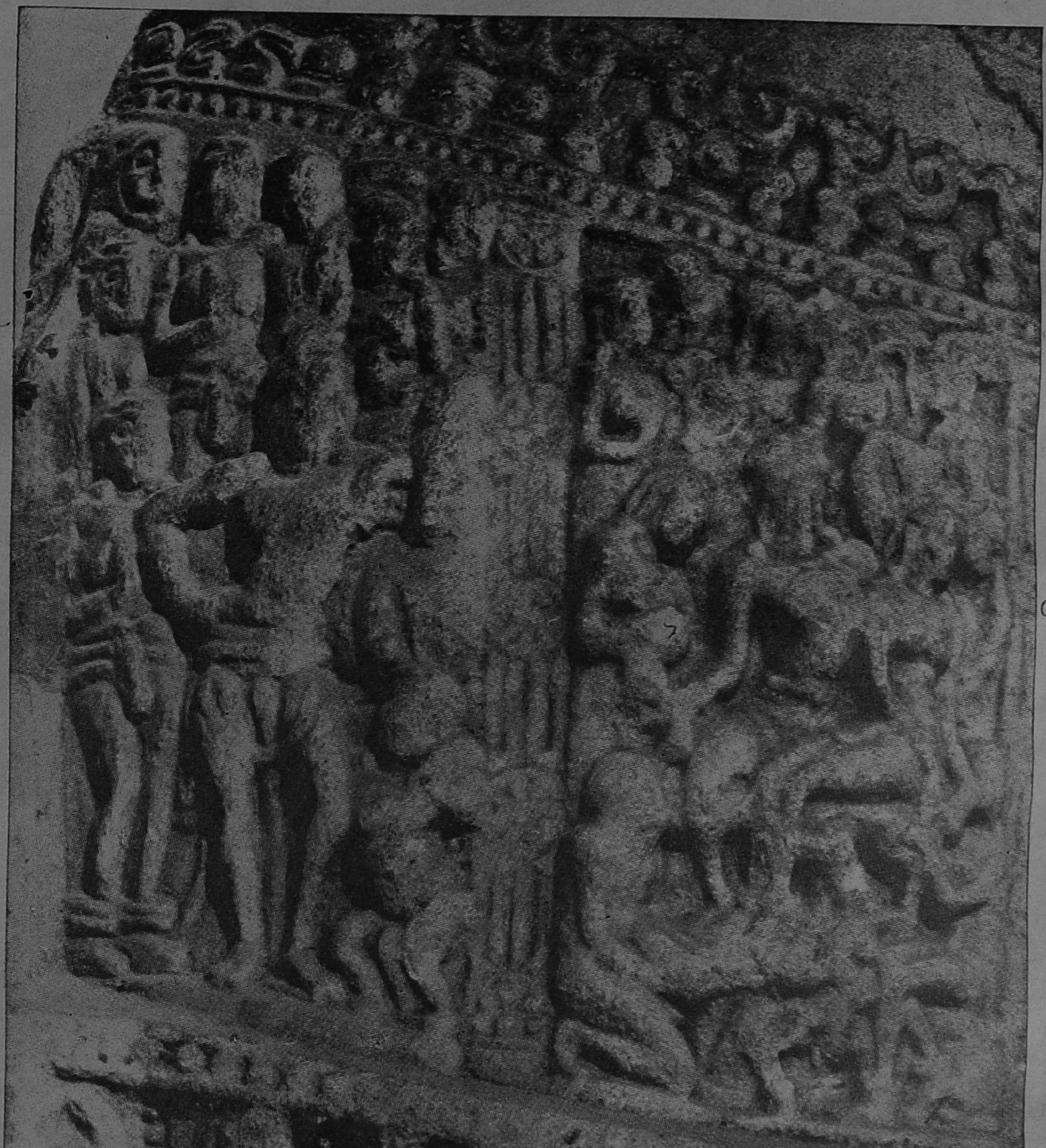

Plate No. LV

Plate No. LVI

257-4—17